FOSTERING UNITY AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS THROUGH MISSIONAL CHURCH WORKSHOP AT NEW HOPE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

HyungYong Choi

Bachelor of Art, Northpoint Bible College, 2008
MDiv, Boston University School of Theology, 2012

Mentor

Seok Jae Jeon, DMiss

Faculty Consultant

Yoon Sun Shin, DMin

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ABSTRACT

FOSTERING UNITY AMONG CHURCH MEMBERS
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by
HyungYong Choi
United Theological Seminary, 2026

Mentor

Seok Jae Jeon, DMiss

Faculty Consultant

Yoon Sun Shin, DMin

New Hope Global Methodist Church, a church plant in Presque Isle, Maine, experiences division between founding members and newer congregants rooted in different views of the church's identity and mission. This project tests whether a Missional Church Workshop–six sessions including a shared missional project–can cultivate a common missional vision, strengthen relationships, and increase unity. Using qualitative methods (pre- and post-workshop surveys and interviews), the study examines changes in participants' understanding of missional church, sense of God's calling, and perceptions

of unity. Findings will offer insight for New Hope GMC and other church plants pursuing unity through missional purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and above all, I give all glory, honor, and praise to our faithful God, who has been with me and guided me throughout my entire journey of faith. It has been the Lord's steadfast presence and gracious leading that have sustained me to this point.

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I also offer my sincere and heartfelt thanks to my mother, GwiJa Park, who generously covered my tuition in full. Your extraordinary generosity and kindness made this journey possible, and I remain deeply grateful.

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I extend special thanks to all the members of New Hope Global Methodist Church. This study would not have been possible without your trust, open hearts, and willingness to walk together through seasons of challenge and growth. I am especially grateful to those who participated in the Missional Church Workshop–sharing your stories with

honesty and committing yourselves to prayer, learning, and service. Your desire to seek unity in Christ and to participate faithfully in God's mission gave life and depth to this project.

During long nights of study, demanding seasons of ministry, and moments of discouragement, the faith, perseverance, and quiet strength of so many–often expressed in unseen ways–became living testimonies of God's grace to me. I am profoundly thankful for every person who carried this journey with me.

My prayer is that this work will serve not merely as a requirement for a degree, but as a faithful witness to God's reconciling mission and a meaningful resource for churches that long for unity, faithfulness, and a renewed participation in God's redemptive work.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Jesus Christ, my Savior, and to His body, the Church. In a special way, I dedicate this work to all pastors and church leaders who are laboring faithfully on the front lines of ministry–engaged in intense spiritual warfare, bearing wounds, enduring criticism, shedding tears, and yet continuing to pray and long for God's church to become truly missional. This work is for those who sow seeds with tears, trusting God even in seasons of pain and exhaustion. You will reap with songs of joy. May all that is written here serve Christ's Church and bring glory to His holy name.

ABBREVIATIONS

GMC	Global Methodist Church
UMC	United Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION

New Hope Global Methodist Church (New Hope GMC), located in Presque Isle, Maine, was established amid denominational conflict, congregational discernment, and sustained prayer. In September 2022, a small group of faithful believers made the decision to leave a familiar institutional environment in order to follow the Word of God. This decision was grounded not merely in institutional realignment but in a shared desire to remain faithful to what the congregation discerned as God's leading for its life and witness. Within less than a year after its founding, the congregation experienced rapid growth. What began as a worshiping community of fewer than thirty people expanded to an average weekly attendance of approximately seventy-five to eighty-five.[1] However, this growth was accompanied by unexpected growing pains within the congregation.

As new members from diverse racial, cultural, and regional backgrounds joined the church, relational tension emerged between founding members and newcomers. Founding members who had carried much of the burden and sacrifice during the early stages of church planting gradually began to feel marginalized, while newer members experienced frustration with no opportunity for participation in decision-making and leadership. Over time, these small conflicts intensified, and jealousy, misunderstanding, and mistrust took root within the congregation. What initially appeared as isolated

[1] New Hope Global Methodist Church, *Weekly Worship Attendance Record*, unpublished internal church document, Presque Isle, ME, 2022–2023.

interpersonal tensions gradually revealed deeper questions of identity, belonging, and shared purpose. As a result, the church began to shift its focus away from bearing witness to God's grace and toward internal struggles centered on influence and control.

This situation is not unique to New Hope GMC. Many churches across North America are experiencing rapid environmental changes due to social transformation, population mobility, technological advancement, and cultural polarization.[2] In these shifting contexts, congregations often drift toward self-preservation, prioritizing institutional stability and internal maintenance rather than active participation in God's mission. From a missional theological perspective, such drift signals not simply organizational stress but a theological dislocation of the church's identity.[3] Missional theology emphasizes that the church's identity cannot be separated from God's sending purpose. When this identity is neglected, congregations risk replacing discernment and witness with organizational maintenance, personal preferences, and inward-focused ministry.

My ministry journey has likewise been shaped through repeated encounters with division and conflict within the church. Through experiences of multi-church appointments, mediation between denominational leadership and local congregations, and conflict resolution amid theological polarization, God has formed my pastoral identity as a minister of reconciliation and peace. These experiences have functioned not only as pastoral challenges but as formative sites of theological reflection on the nature of ecclesial unity. In reflecting on the growing pains of New Hope GMC, a clear pattern

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[2] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 368–389.

[3] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 227–233.

emerged: when a congregation loses clarity about its fundamental purpose, relationships often shift from cooperation in God's mission toward competition for influence and control. This observation forms the central pastoral and theological conviction of this project–that the recovery of the church's missional identity provides a critical pathway toward communal unity.

This Doctor of Ministry project seeks to demonstrate that unity within a newly established congregation is strengthened not primarily through conflict management techniques or organizational restructuring, but through intentional missional formation that restores identity and reshapes communal life. Situated within a practice-based and confessional framework, this project assumes that ecclesial unity is fundamentally a theological reality grounded in participation in God's mission rather than a product of managerial consensus. When congregants come to understand themselves as co-participants in God's redemptive work, they begin to view one another not as competitors or threats but as partners in the ministry of the gospel. Missional identity thus serves as both a theological and relational foundation for sustainable congregational unity.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to foster unity within New Hope GMC by implementing a missional church workshop that integrates biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary insights, and by engaging participants in a shared missional project. This project is shaped by the conviction that formation precedes strategy and that shared practices of discernment and service can reorient congregational life toward God's calling. The central research question guiding this study is as follows:

> How can a structured missional formation program that integrates theological learning, spiritual practices, and communal service contribute to healing relational division and cultivating a shared understanding of God's calling for the church?

This project consists of six educational sessions, including a congregational missional project. Each session is intentionally designed to promote both spiritual formation and relational restoration. Participants begin with prayer and devotional reflection, share personal stories and faith experiences, and establish a covenant of confidentiality to create a safe environment for honest dialogue. These practices reflect a theological commitment to the work of the Holy Spirit in shaping communal trust and mutual accountability. The educational content focuses on unity in Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, the church's missional calling, and leadership principles that guide congregational change. The missional project serves as an experiential component that enables participants to embody what they learn through shared service and reflection.

This study employs qualitative research methods to examine the impact of the missional church workshop on communal re-bonding and deepening missional understanding. Data was collected through pre- and post- workshop surveys, individual interviews, and small group discussion records. Consistent with the aims of practical theology, the analysis prioritizes interpretive depth over statistical generalization. Rather than emphasizing numerical growth, the analysis focuses on changes in participants' language, perceptions of calling, and relational attitudes. Particular attention is given to how participants define a "missional church," understand personal and communal vocation, and perceive relationships among members from diverse backgrounds.

The significance of this project is twofold. First, it offers a contextual and practical strategy to help New Hope GMC address internal conflict and recover its identity and mission. Second, it provides a transferable model for other church plants experiencing similar challenges related to identity formation and relational fragmentation.

This project is organized into six chapters that together explore the problem of congregational division and propose a missional pathway toward unity at New Hope Global Methodist Church. Chapter One examines the ministry context of New Hope GMC by describing the church's geographic, demographic, and historical setting, as well as the pastor's ministry journey that shaped the vision for this project. Chapter Two establishes the biblical foundation for the study through an exegetical examination of John 17:19–23, highlighting Jesus' prayer for unity among believers and its missional significance for the life of the church. Chapter Three explores historical foundations by examining the Korean revival movement, particularly the Pyongyang Revival, demonstrating how repentance, prayer, and shared mission produced unity within the church. Chapter Four develops the theological foundations for the project, engaging missional ecclesiology to show how the church's identity is rooted in participation in the mission of the Triune God. Chapter Five presents the interdisciplinary foundations for the project, drawing on leadership theory and related insights to explain how congregational transition and spiritual formation can contribute to renewed missional identity. Finally, Chapter Six analyzes the implementation of the Missional Church Workshop at New Hope GMC, presenting the research methodology, evaluation of the workshop, and reflections on the outcomes of the project. Together, these chapters provide a theological, historical, and practical framework for fostering unity within the congregation through participation in God's mission.

In dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this project seeks to help New Hope GMC become the church for which Jesus prayed–a community united in Him so that the world may see the gospel made visible. This project is offered as a faithful,

theologically grounded response to the lived realities of congregational division, trusting that unity emerges not through control but through shared participation in God's reconciling work. As believers learn and serve together within God's mission, diversity becomes not a problem to manage but a testimony to celebrate, bearing witness to the grace and reconciling power of God's kingdom.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

The world is undergoing unprecedented transformation, and Christianity now finds itself navigating complex social changes and demographic shifts brought about by immigration, migration, and globalizing forces such as social media, rapid technological advancement, and the evolution of worldwide transportation networks. These developments have created a context in which many Christians encounter religious pluralism, racial diversity, cultural differences, and the rising presence of the religiously unaffiliated.[1] Unfortunately, many mainline Protestant denominations in today's global landscape have struggled to respond effectively to these shifts and have experienced significant membership decline. Many churches continue to focus primarily on institutional concerns – such as maintaining buildings, sustaining social clubs, pursuing political agendas, managing sin, and seeking numerical expansion – rather than fully participating in God's mission for the redemption of those who are lost.

In response to these challenges, a significant theological recalibration is required, along with the recovery of the missional identity of the church. David J. Bosch

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[1] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 56–63.

emphasizes that the mission of God is not merely one task among many that the church undertakes, but the very reason for the church's existence.[2] In this sense, the church is called to be an instrument of God's redemptive work in the world; its purpose is not to become a successful institution in itself, but to live out and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as a people who are sent and who faithfully embody that calling. Similarly, Lesslie Newbigin stresses that in a pluralistic society, the role and purpose of the church must be deeply rooted in the gospel while meaningfully engaging the cultural context in which God has placed it, so that the love of Jesus Christ may be faithfully communicated.[3] In other words, the purpose of the church's existence is found not primarily within the church itself, but among those outside the church who have not yet encountered the saving grace of God.

Darrell L. Guder further develops this missional vision by describing the church as a "sent community," one that moves beyond inward-centeredness and internal divisions and embraces diversity as an essential element of participation in God's mission. In a similar vein, Christopher J.H. Wright emphasizes that the mission of God precedes and defines the mission of the church, and that every local congregation is called to serve as a visible sign of God's redemptive purpose for all nations.[4]

In line with the insights of these theologians, it becomes clear that churches should move beyond internal preoccupations and reclaim the purpose and essence of their

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[2] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 390–393.

[3] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 222–233.

[4] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 25–27.

existence. By doing so, they will be equipped to engage effectively in God's mission amid a rapidly changing world. This conviction is not merely theoretical, it is rooted in lived pastoral experience, particularly as reflected in the story of New Hope GMC.

The story of New Hope GMC, a young church within the newly established Global Methodist Church, vividly illustrates both the challenges and opportunities that accompany the recovery and practice of a missional identity. As the founding pastor, I began this ministry after leaving a former denomination, guided by a vision of faithfulness to Scripture and a commitment to forming a Christ-centered community that bears witness to the gospel. Although we started with fewer than thirty people, by God's help and blessing our average attendance grew to between seventy-five and eighty-five within just one year.

However, this blessing was accompanied by unexpected growing pains and challenges. Rapid growth brought a rich diversity into the church, including people from various racial and cultural backgrounds, multicultural families, and individuals who had relocated from other regions. While this diversity reflected the beauty of God's kingdom in Christ, it also gave rise to tension and conflict. Many newer members found it difficult to enter relational networks that had formed among founding members, while some founders struggled to accept the changes brought about by rapid growth, fearing the loss of their place and influence within the congregation. Such tensions are not unique to this congregation; intercultural theology helps explain how diversity, when not shaped by mutuality, often leads to fragmentation rather than unity, and therefore calls the church

toward a process of reciprocal "giving and receiving" in which particular identities are honored within a shared ecclesial life.[5]

Faced with this new challenge, I found myself pondering questions. "How can New Hope GMC bring together founding members and newer members from different racial and cultural backgrounds amid rapid growth? How can existing members learn to embrace newcomers as partners and family in Christ, rather than viewing them as threats or objects of envy?" These questions led me toward deeper reflection: "What is the essence of the church, and why has God called and placed this particular community together at New Hope Global Methodist Church?" After much prayer and reflection, I concluded that only by returning to the essence and purpose of the church could we transcend divisions of ethnicity, culture, and circumstance, ultimately uniting in Jesus Christ.

Moreover, these experiences closely aligned with the claims of Alan Hirsch, whose work has had a significant influence on the missional church movement. Hirsch emphasizes that in a rapidly changing, globalized world, it is crucial for the church to rediscover its missional identity in order to survive and remain vibrant.[6] Without an intentional focus on participation in God's mission, the church can easily become preoccupied with preserving familiar structures rather than embracing the redemptive possibilities that diversity and change present. The implications for New Hope GMC became increasingly clear: intentional missional formation was necessary if the congregation was to mature in unity and faithfulness.

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[5] Justine George*, Intercultural Theology: An Approach to Theologizing in the Context of Pluralism and Globalization* (Toronto: Toronto School of Theology, 2012), 27–30.

[6] Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 78–79.

Craig Van Gelder describes the missional church and its essence as a Spirit-created community, called to participate in God's redemptive work in the world.[7] A missional church shifts its center of gravity away from self-preservation and toward engagement with the local community and the wider world. Within such a community, people who are different from one another learn to see each other not as competitors or obstacles, but as co-laborers and partners in the gospel, working together in cooperation to expand the kingdom of God. Drawing on the biblical imagery of reconciled relationships within God's kingdom (Isa. 11:6-9), we learn to collaborate as co-laborers under the lordship of Jesus Christ in the pursuit of God's redemptive mission. Andrew Walls notes that cross-cultural encounters within the church are not problems to be solved, but opportunities to embody the love of Jesus and to enrich the church's witness and mission.[8] Likewise, Samuel Escobar emphasizes that the movement of people across cultures and borders calls the church to listen, learn, and adapt, embodying the love of Christ while remaining faithful to its missional calling.[9]

The history of New Hope GMC is inextricably linked to my own spiritual journey, ultimately leading me, as its leader, to pray earnestly and navigate many existing challenges. This Doctor of Ministry project emerges at the intersection of personal vocation and congregational context, grounded in the confessional conviction that the local church is called to serve as a living sign of God's kingdom–welcoming, reconciling,

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[7] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 41–45.

[8] Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 3-5.

[9] Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission: The Challenge for Global Christianity* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 62-63.

and sending disciples as participants in God's redemptive mission in the world.

Context

Geographic Descriptions

My ministry unfolds in Aroostook County, one of sixteen counties in Maine, located along the United States – Canada border. It was once renowned as the potato capital of the world, hosting an annual Maine Potato Blossom Festival. In 1959, Aroostook's potato acreage equaled about two-thirds the area of New York City, and if all the potatoes sold for food and seed purposes were loaded on a train, it would reach from Boston, Massachusetts to Washington, DC. Aroostook County–the largest county east of the Rocky Mountains–grows more potatoes than any other area in the world.[10] However, technological change and interstate competition have significantly altered Maine's position in the potato industry, pushing the region to the margins of national agricultural production.

Aroostook River winds through the area, offering opportunities for outdoor recreation and contributing to the region's natural beauty. Presque Isle, where New Hope Global Methodist Church is located, serves as the commercial center and largest city in Aroostook County, Maine. The city features institutions such as Northern Maine Community College, University of Maine at Presque Isle, Northern Maine Fairgrounds, the Aroostook Centre Mall, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital and the Presque Isle International Airport. Many residents in Presque Isle take great pride in their community

[10] Kathy McCarty, "A History of Potatoes in Aroostook County," *The County*, August 25, 2009, https://thecounty.me/2009/08/25/living/a-history-of-potatoes-in-aroostook-county/ (accessed March 4, 2026).

and have a strong sense of confidence, considering Presque Isle to be the center of Aroostook County.

Unfortunately, Presque Isle is not a destination that attracts many visitors or migrants due to ongoing depopulation and almost six-month-long winters.[11] There is a gradual migration of residents toward southern regions in search of employment opportunities or access to higher education. Nevertheless, Presque Isle remains a cherished home for those who appreciate its tranquil environment, strong community values, and unique charm. For those who choose to stay, the town offers a slower pace of life, a deep connection to nature, and a strong sense of belonging that is hard to find elsewhere. Despite persistent challenges, the community's commitment to preserving its heritage and fostering local growth continues to make Presque Isle a meaningful place for its residents.

Demographic Descriptions

The estimated 2023 population within the study area is 39,088. The Population of the study area in 2010 was 39,992. Over the past decade, the community has experienced a net population decline of 904 residents. However, according to MissionInsite, in 2028, five years from now, the population is estimated to be 38,602, representing a further reduction of 486 people. This projection reflects an estimated decline rate of -1.2% from 2023 to 2028. Unfortunately, the population within the study area is declining somewhat faster than the statewide growth rate. While the study area is projected to decline by

[11] United States Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Presque Isle City, Maine," accessed March 1, 2026, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/presqueislecitymaine

-1.2% over the next five years, the state of Maine is projected to remain relatively stable at approximately 0.1%.[12]

This gradual population decline presents a realistic challenge to the ministry direction of New Hope GMC. In a context where the local population is decreasing, our church can no longer expect growth based simply on natural community expansion. Instead, this reality calls us to focus more intentionally on evangelism, community engagement, and discipleship. Within a shrinking mission field, we are called not merely to gather people, but to nurture and build up each person deeply in faith.

Consequently, instead of measuring success primarily by numerical expansion, we must ask whether we are truly a community participating in God's mission. Even amid the reality of demographic decline, the church can faithfully carry out its calling in the place where God has planted it. It is this faithfulness in participating in God's mission that will ultimately shape the future of New Hope GMC.

Racial and Ethnic Trend Description

In 2010, there were 210 Asians in the study area.[13] In 2028, the estimated number of Asians is 188.[14] This number corresponds to 0.47% of the total study area. From 2010 to 2023, there was a decrease of twenty-six people in the last thirteen years.[15] However,

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[12] The ExecutiveInsite Report, Prepared for: United Theological Seminary, Study area: Geography: Counties – Aroostook County (ME)," Published March 26, 2024, MissionInsite, https://missioninsite.com/, 3.

[13] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[14] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[15] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

according to MissionInsite projections, the Asian population is expected to increase slightly by 2028, rising by four individuals to a total of 188.[16]

The number of Black/African Americans decreased by seventy-four from 310 in 2010 to 236 in 2023.[17] This number corresponds to 0.60% of the total study area population.[18] By 2028, a slight additional decrease is projected, with the population expected to decline by one individual to 235.[19]

The White population was 38,002 in 2010.[20] In 2023, it is estimated that 1,176 people decreased to 36,826 people.[21] This number corresponds to 94.21% of the total study area population. By 2028, the White population is projected to decline by an additional 650 individuals, resulting in an estimated total of 36,176.[22]

The Ethnic group that continues to grow in the study area is the Hispanic/Latino group. In 2010, there were a total of 426 persons, and the estimated number of persons in 2023 is 443 persons, an increase of seventeen persons.[23] By 2028, this population is projected to increase by an additional fifty-six individuals, reaching an estimated total of

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[16] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[17] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[18] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[19] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[20] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[21] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[22] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[23] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

499.[24] The number of modern Hispanic/Latino populations in 2023 is equivalent to 1.13% of the total study area population.[25]

Historical Description

Before New Hope GMC was established, we attended Grant Memorial United Methodist Church. Beginning in 2019, tensions arose regarding the New England United Methodist Conference and the denomination's response to LGBTQIA+ issues. Our primary concerns centered on what appeared to be organizational cover-ups and the absence of clear theological guidance. Formal requests for clarity regarding the conference's theological direction and doctrinal stance were submitted on multiple occasions, yet no definitive responses were provided.

This matter came to a head at a formally convened Church Conference attended by seventy-three professing members. Our purpose was to pray and discern the future direction of the church. However, to the deep disappointment of those present, the bishop abruptly ended the meeting just three minutes after it began. The reason given was that the current bishop was about to retire and that we should reapply for the discernment process once a new bishop was appointed. At that time, however, no clear timeline existed for the appointment of a successor, while Resolution 2553 – approved by the General Conference and permitting churches to disaffiliate while retaining local church property and asset – was nearing its expiration. As a United Methodist pastor, I could not

[24] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

[25] "The ExecutiveInsite Report," 3.

hide my deep disappointment with what I perceived as the denomination's unfair handling of the situation.

When many church members came to realize that they had no right to know, speak, or vote during our Church Conference, we were ready to leave the New England United Methodist Conference's corrupt system and embark on a new journey. Despite giving up the beautiful church building and $2 million endowment, many church members made their decision based on the Word of God without hesitation. On September 10, 2022, the ten faithful church members gathered in the presence of God, proclaimed their biblical faith, and voted to establish the New Hope GMC. This marked the beginning of our new journey. On September 18, ten church leaders and twelve church members held their first service at the Presque Isle Snow Club, led by the layperson, Noel Currie. Two weeks later, Rev. HyungYong Choi, the first ordained elder appointed within the Global Methodist Northeastern Conference, officially began pastoral leadership of the congregation.

Present Ministries

When I was officially appointed as the first senior pastor of New Hope GMC in October 2022, the congregation was still reeling from the wounds of separation from the United Methodist Church. Our members carried a mix of relief, gratitude, and lingering anxiety about the uncertain future. The practical challenges of launching a new congregation – finances, securing a meeting place, and meeting building codes – were daunting but manageable through God's provision and help. However, a more complex

and unexpected challenge soon emerged: growing relational tension between founding members and newcomers.

Between July and September 2023, average worship attendance increased dramatically from 35-40 to 75-85. Nearly half of the congregation was now composed of new members, many of whom came from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, including multicultural families and individuals who had relocated from outside the region.

What should have been pure joy quickly revealed undercurrents of tension. Some founding members began to feel displaced or overshadowed, while certain newcomers found it difficult to integrate into the church's established relational patterns. Jealousy, misunderstanding, and subtle exclusion began to take root. For example, one new family, overflowing with gratitude to God for His healing grace, began regularly bringing abundant food for fellowship after worship. This generosity created a joyful atmosphere for most – but drew complaints from some leaders about "waste" and the burden of washing dishes. Ironically, several of these individuals had previously expressed concern that fellowship participation was too low and that they themselves bore too much responsibility. In that moment, I was reminded of John 12:4-6, when Judas Iscariot criticized Mary for anointing Jesus with expensive perfume, focusing on the perceived waste rather than the act of devotion and gratitude. As Craig Van Gelder cautions, churches can become "self-referential communities more concerned with managing their own life than with discerning the Spirit's calling into God's mission."[26] The underlying issue was not food or logistics but a deeper loss of missional focus.

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[26] Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church*, 35.

These tensions were not limited to times of fellowship. Unspoken competition and strain began to surface between long-standing musicians and newer musicians, between veteran Sunday School teachers and those more recently appointed, and even between founding members and newer members of similar socioeconomic backgrounds. I began to sense the formation of invisible "fault lines" within the congregation – fault lines that were threatening the very life of the church. In January 2024, we witnessed the tangible consequences of this hidden division. Founding members prevented the newly elected lay leader and other committee chairpersons–who had been elected at the December 2023 Church Conference–from attending meetings. They insisted that decision-making authority be limited exclusively to founding members, effectively excluding others from participation. This development was particularly painful, as one of the central reasons for leaving the United Methodist Church had been the denial of members' rights to speak, be informed, and vote.

In prayerful reflection, this situation evoked the parable of the prodigal son, in which the older son responds with resentment upon the younger son's return. Likewise, my congregation was not living into unity. In John 17:21, Jesus prayed that His followers "may be one," so that the world might know the Father had sent Him. As Miroslav Volf observes, the unity of the church is not merely an internal concern but is missionally significant because it renders the gospel visible to the world.[27]

Recognizing the seriousness of this moment, I sensed God's call to act intentionally as a peacemaker within the congregation. The goal was not merely to resolve conflict, but to guide the church toward a renewed missional identity in which all

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[27] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 45.

members–founding and new alike–could recognize one another as co-laborers in Christ rather than rivals. As missiologist Andrew F. Walls observes, cultural diversity within the church is not an obstacle to mission but a divine means for the expansion of the gospel.[28] If embraced as a gift from God, diversity can become a powerful testimony to the reconciling work of Christ and the unity made possible through shared participation in God's mission.

Ministry Journey

Growing up in South Korea

I was born on June 17, 1984, in Anyang, South Korea, the youngest of two sons. After my birth, my family moved to Hakik-dong, Incheon, where my mother's siblings lived. Today, Hakik-dong is filled with high-rise apartment and government buildings, but at that time it was undeveloped and nearly desolate. My family's life was modest. While we were not poor–my paternal grandfather's wealth offered a measure of comfort–my mother longed for a life built on her husband's hard work rather than on inherited resources. She wanted a partner who was diligent and faithful, even if it meant earning little. My father, however, raised in affluence, had different ambitions. He pursued business ventures with dreams of rapid success, but repeated failures and his frequent drinking with business partners strained my parents' marriage. I vividly recall being six years old and tearfully asking my maternal grandmother, "Grandma, why do my parents fight all the time?"

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[28] Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 53.

As a result of this challenging family history, my mother rediscovered her faith in Jesus, the same Jesus she had fervently believed in as a young woman. She began attending church, and by God's grace, she transformed from an image of a woman dependent on her husband to an independent, pioneering woman who would earn her own money and educate her children. She became a successful insurance agent, earning numerous awards. When I was seven years old, we moved to a better apartment because of my mom's achievement.

However, my parents never stopped their intensive argument. My childhood was marked by a great deal of worry and anxiety due to my parents' frequent arguments. As far back as I can remember, whenever my parents would fight, I would retreat to my room, gripped by anxiety, my heart sinking with every loud noise. Yet, amidst these turbulent times, I had one profound blessing that God bestowed upon me: it was my maternal grandmother. Whenever my maternal grandmother visited our house, my parents' conflicts would subside, and her presence enveloped me in a sense of security, comfort, and familial love. In hindsight, I believe God used her presence to give me a concrete glimpse of unconditional love. Even when I made mistakes and received reprimands from my mother, I could always find refuge behind my maternal grandmother, who unconditionally shielded me. She became, for me, a living sign of Christ's gentleness in the midst of fear and instability.

One Sunday during the summer when I was eleven years old, I was playing at home. My mother, busy loading laundry into the washing machine, noticed me playing alone at home and suggested I go to church if I ever got bored. She mentioned that the church had a children's program where many kids could play together. Intrigued, I

decided to go to church for the first time. The church was the Haick Ik Methodist Church, and it was there that I encountered many dedicated Sunday school teachers. Although I did not immediately find Jesus, the persistent efforts and prayers of these Sunday school teachers gradually introduced me to the grace of Jesus.

On my birthday in June during my second year of middle school, I personally encountered Jesus through the love and dedication of my former Sunday school teacher, leading me to surrender to God's love. Her devotion led me to ask, "Why is she being so kind to me, and why does the Jesus she speaks about love me?" Her unconditional love led me to Jesus. By my second year of high school, I had made the decision to become a pastor. With the unwavering support of excellent pastors and my church community, I embarked on the path to prepare for my calling. However, I never thought that God would lead me to the United States at that time.

As I approached graduation from high school, my youth pastor and mentor advised me that developing proficiency in English and pursuing a strong education would be essential for becoming an effective pastor. Taking this counsel to heart, I decided to come to the United States to study. In 2004, I enrolled at Northpoint Bible College, which was introduced to me by my senior pastor, and completed my studies there in 2008.
I then continued my education at Boston University School of Theology, earning my Master of Divinity in 2012. That same year, in July, I answered the call to serve the Champlain Isle United Methodist Parish as a local pastor. During this season, I received deep love and support from the congregations, which contributed significantly to both my personal and pastoral growth.

In June 2015, I took a significant step in my ministry journey when I was commissioned as an Elder in the New England United Methodist Conference. Leaving my home church, I accepted a full-time call to Orleans UMC, experiencing four years of substantial church growth as the congregation actively engaged with the community. This period marked a transition for me from receiving care to bearing responsibility for congregational renewal and outreach. In June 2019, I reached a milestone in my ministry as I was ordained as an elder in the New England United Methodist Conference. Unfortunately, against both my church's and my own will, I was then called to serve as the senior pastor of Grant Memorial UMC in Maine just three weeks later. It was the first time in my life that I asked my bishop to reconsider, but his decision remained firm. When he said that God entrusts individuals with the largest church in a district for a reason, I responded with prayerful obedience.

In 2019, witnessing the intensification of the homosexuality issue and perceiving what I considered injustice within the denomination I belonged to, along with concerns about the denomination's approach to the Word of God, I felt compelled to take action. In response, I joined with other evangelical church members, and together we established New Hope GMC in October 2022. In the fall of 2023, I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary, furthering my commitment to theological and pastoral growth.

Three Significant Events

Three defining spiritual experiences have shaped my life and ministry: my salvation, my call to pastoral ministry, and my awakening as a peacemaker. Each event

was a pivotal moment in God's ongoing work of transformation of my life for His purposes. When I entered middle school, God placed an extraordinary person in my life – my Sunday school teacher, Kyung-Ae Hwang. She consistently welcomed me, even though she had never met me before I joined her class. At a time when my father's business was collapsing and my home life was deeply unstable; her love and kindness became an anchor for my soul.

On my fifteenth birthday, no one remembered my special day. I expected something from my parents, and I was waiting for them to surprise me. Finally, someone rang my doorbell. I thought it was my parents, but instead found my Sunday school teacher standing there, drenched in sweat after climbing five flights of stairs with two large bags of food. There was no elevator in my apartment building. I was speechless. She simply said, "Hello, Choi! God loves you so much. Happy Birthday!" After she left, I wept uncontrollably. I knew deep inside that this was more than human kindness – it was the love of Christ reaching out to me. Then my questioning started, "Why does God love me so much?" I needed an answer that went beyond reason alone. I stayed in the prayer room for more than two hours in silence, finally surrendering and confessing my past sins with tears. I did not know why I did that, but I knew deep within me that I needed to. After my confession, I could believe everything that I had been taught in church. It was powerful and irresistible. Above all, I realized that God was with me always. That day, I met Jesus the Christ, not my Sunday school Jesus, and through repentance received Him as my Savior. I surrendered to His unconditional love.

The second significant spiritual milestone in my life was receiving my calling to pastoral ministry. Until the age of seventeen, I had never considered becoming a pastor;

my plans for the future were vague and undefined. That changed during a church summer camp when a special guest speaker delivered a message on "dream," asking probing questions such as, "What is your dream?" and "How can you glorify God with your life?" These words struck a deep chord in my heart. Up to that point, I had been content simply attending church without seriously reflecting on my future or how to live in a way that would please God.

Moved by this challenge, I began praying earnestly each way: "What do you want, Lord? What path are you giving me? Show me… Please, show me." I repeated this prayer almost daily for a month. The answer came in an unexpected way – through a conversation with a friend who was experiencing a turbulent family situation. His father, an alcoholic, had been abusive toward his mother, leaving my friend filled with anger and fear. In his desperation, he confided to me, "I want to kill my father. I want him to die." Upon hearing this, I desperately wanted to help him, even though I knew there was little I could do. I listened for hours, prayed for him and encouraged him with messages that I had heard in sermons. Before leaving, my friend said, "Choi, when you prayed for me, I felt God touch my heart. Thank you." In that instant, my own heart burned within me. I realized that God had gifted me to bring His comfort and truth into the brokenness of others' lives. That was the moment I embraced His call to pastoral ministry.

The third important spiritual event was discovered while I was writing my spiritual autobiography for the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary. It was realization that God had called me to be a peacemaker and mediator before Him. I came to understand that God had healed the pain and wounds of my childhood, transforming my weaknesses into strengths for His purpose. As a child, due to

my parents' repeated arguments, I would always retreat to my room whenever a fight began. I ran from problems. This pattern of withdrawing from uncomfortable situations became deeply ingrained in me. However, after encountering the Lord, this aspect of my life began to change. Instead of running to my room, I actively took on the role of a mediator between my mother and father. Through this theological reflection, I recognized that the call to mediation and peacemaking had quietly shaped many of my pastoral instincts and practices over time. After gaining this new perspective through writing my spiritual autobiography, I began to recognize how the role of mediator and peacemaker had consistently been present throughout my past ministries within the church. This role as mediator has since become a defining aspect of my pastoral identity, influencing how I approach conflict, guide congregations, and build unity in the body of Christ.

Churches I Served

In July 2012, I was appointed as the local pastor of Champlain Isle United Methodist Parish – a three-point charge consisting of Isle La Motte UMC, North Hero UMC, and Grand Isle UMC. Sundays began early, with services at 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11:00 a.m. It was physically exhausting, but the love and support I received from these congregations made it one of the most joyful seasons of my life. One persistent challenge was the strained relationship among the three churches, often clashing over the allocation of shared budgets for the pastor's salary and parsonage costs. To address this, I regularly organized a Korean Buffet meal, creating space for the churches to gather, share food, and begin rebuilding trust. I also make it a priority to provide regular updates about each church in all committee meetings, fostering transparency and mutual appreciation.

Moreover, during my time there, one of the churches experienced a devastating fire accident, leading the second and third churches to worship together for a year. This period of joint worship proved transformative, allowing us to naturally gain a better understanding of each other and build strong relationships. In the second year, members from all three churches collaborated on a heartwarming project – they came together to send me off into married life. From decorating the house to organizing the wedding reception, they devoted themselves to every detail. I remember the expressions on their faces when I shared that I was getting married on a budget of $300. As the three churches practiced unity in Christ through shared worship and shared work, a deep joy and peace overflowed in our common life.

Just when I believed I could remain on Champlain Isle forever, God redirected my path to Orleans United Methodist Church. While the congregation and I felt a profound sadness, their consideration for my future led them to send me off with a heartfelt blessing and tears. I distinctly recall the last sermon, where emotion overwhelmed me, and I found myself crying like a child.

Arriving at Orleans UMC, I carried both gratitude and a sense of responsibility shaped by the love I had received. However, a significant challenge awaited me: the relationship between the local church and the New England Conference was strained and negative. This strain was visible in the fact that Orleans UMC had not contributed any Mission Share to the conference for the two years preceding my arrival. On the first day during my office hour, the Church Council chairman came in and gave me a two-hour rant about the unfairness of the New England Conference and started complaining about

how the conference was sending a full-time pastor again when they had asked for a part-time pastor. I did not know that.

It was probably the worst start ever, but I went on to teach and preach about the good things that the conference is doing in South Africa, emphasizing that the conference is not our enemy, but a helper who is there to support us. I also asked how the local church can participate and do the Great Commission that Jesus commanded, pointing out that the conference supports missionaries and does many good works. Above all, I consistently prayed and preached, urging the congregation to rediscover the essence of God's mission and to concentrate on sharing the gospel with our neighbors in the world. Through these efforts and prayers, the church experienced significant growth, and by the time I concluded my tenure, we had successfully paid 100% of our Mission Share to the conference. I vividly recall a moment when my district Superintendent called me and posed a question that took me by surprise, "What magic did you do?"

In June 2019, after a long period of waiting, the significant moment finally arrived when I was ordained as an elder in the New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. However, the joy and excitement of this achievement did not last long. Shortly afterward, I received news of my next pastoral appointment, Grant Memorial UMC in Maine. Although the bishop explained that I was being sent to the largest church in a district, it was difficult for me to accept the fact that I would once again have to leave behind the congregation to which I had grown deeply attached. Nevertheless, after a phone conversation with the bishop, I accepted the new pastoral appointment with a heart of obedience to God.

At first glance, Grant Memorial UMC seemed promising – a large building, ample parking, and a healthy attendance. However, beneath the surface lay two major challenges: a long-standing financial dispute with the New England Conference over Missional Share payments, and deep congregational division over the issue of homosexuality. Following the first Sunday service, I gathered all the church leaders and proposed two initiatives. First, I proposed the shift from a monthly to a weekly coffee hour, emphasizing its potential impact. Secondly, I shared my pastoral vision. Even though we as United Methodists were living in a challenging time after 2019 Special General Conference, my ministry would focus on Jesus and unity. I encouraged everyone to contribute and support this vision, fostering a sense of collective responsibility.

Within five months of my arrival, a significant achievement unfolded–we successfully paid our Mission Share out of the General Fund. The introduction of a weekly coffee hour following the services, along with the once-a-month Korean Buffet, provided valuable opportunities for liberal and evangelical church members to come together, share meals, and engage in meaningful conversations. This intentional effort resulted in a notable transformation within the church. One concrete indicator of this shift was the reception of fourteen new members through profession of faith, even amid the challenges posed by the pandemic.

In some ways, my role as a mediator had been successful up to this point, but in 2022, unfair treatment and even threats from the denomination left me and my evangelical church members deeply hurt, and we planted New Hope GMC in October 2022. In that season, I could not function primarily as a mediator; I felt compelled to act as an advocate for what I understood to be biblical truth and faithfulness. Now, years

after planting New Hope Global Methodist Church, I find myself functioning as a mediator and peacemaker–seeking reconciliation between God and the congregation and fostering peace among church members themselves through Jesus Christ.

Developing the Synergy

Throughout my ministry, God has consistently placed me in contexts where division threatened the life and mission of the church. From reconciling the three congregations of Champlain Isle United Methodist Parish, to restoring trust between Orleans UMC and the New England Conference, to fostering unity between liberals and evangelicals at Grant Memorial UMC, my pastoral calling has been shaped by the work of mediation and peacemaking. These experiences were not merely circumstantial challenges; they functioned as formative practices through which God prepared me for deeper engagement in reconciling ministry. In this sense, my vocational identity has been progressively shaped with concrete ecclesial contexts marked by conflict and division.

At New Hope GMC, the same calling continues–yet in a more complex form. Here, mediation is not only between theological or institutional conflicts, but between people of different cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and spiritual journey. The rapid growth of the congregation has introduced a rich diversity that reflects the breadth of God's kingdom, while simultaneously intensifying relational strain and communal growing pain. As in my previous ministries, my pastoral task is to cultivate spaces where differences can be addressed honestly in the light of the gospel, where trust is built through sustained presence, and where unity is pursued not by erasing difference but by discerning how diversity may serve God's mission.

Looking ahead, I believe God is calling New Hope GMC to be a model of what a reconciled and missional community can look like in an increasingly polarized world. When diversity is held together by mutual respect, theological clarity and a shared commitment to God's mission, it can become a powerful witness to the surrounding community. My prayer is that, as in my previous ministries, intentional practices of bridge-building, shared service, and communal worship will nurture trust and deepen love among members. Through these practices, unity is not imposed but formed, emerging organically from shared participation in God's reconciling work. In this way, the church will not only survive challenges but thrive as a living testimony of God's reconciling power.

In the years to come, I envision New Hope GMC as a community where differences are celebrated as part of God's creative design, where every member feels seen and valued, and where our unity in Christ becomes the strongest witness we have to a watching world. This vision is grounded not in personal competence alone, but in a confessional trust in God's faithfulness, which has sustained both my ministry and the congregations I have served. As a mediator and peacemaker, I will continue to walk with this church through its growing pains, confident that the God who began a good work among us will, in God's time, bring it to completion. This sense of my identity has significantly shaped the design and development of my DMin project.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

JOHN 17:19-23

[19] And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.
[20]I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, [21] that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22] The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, [23] I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (NRSV)[1]

Introduction

In John 17:19-23, Jesus intercedes for all future believers, describing how believers should relate to one another and how they should be perceived by the world. The dominant theme of Jesus' prayer – unity, sanctification in truth through the Spirit, and participation in the mission of the Sent One – form a foundational vision for understanding the church as missional in nature. By exploring this passage, participants at New Hope Global Methodist Church can reclaim the biblical foundation of the church's mission, reframing difference and conflict not as obstacles to faithfulness but as contexts in which God's reconciling work may be embodied, thereby igniting renewed commitment to God's redemptive work.

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[1] John 17:19-23, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

John 14-17 contains Jesus' farewell discourse, His final words to the disciples delivered in the upper room. As is well known, chapter 17 records the so-called "High Priestly Prayer," which Jesus offered to God the Father on the eve of His suffering on the cross.[2] If the Lord's Prayer instructs disciples how to pray, John 17 reveals how Jesus Himself prays as the faithful intercessor for His followers. In this prayer, Jesus intercedes not only for His immediate disciples but also for those who would believe through their testimony. Structural analysis of John 17 demonstrates that Jesus' repeated petitions for unity are not incidental but central, explicitly linking sanctification, perseverance, and mission to relational oneness with the Father and the Son.[3] Richard Bauckham observes that in John's Gospel the "glory" of God is not an abstract attribute but the visible manifestation of God's saving action in history. In John 17, the glory shared between the Father and the Son is extended to believers so that their unity becomes a public revelation of God's redemptive work in Christ. Unity, therefore, is not merely relational harmony but doxological participation in God's mission.[4] This prayer is structured in three parts: first, Jesus prays for Himself (vv. 1-5); second, He prays for His disciples (vv. 6-19); and third, He prays for future believers who would come to faith (vv. 20-26). Accordingly, John 17 functions as a theological summit within the Gospel of John, encapsulating both the purpose of Jesus' mission and His hope for the community that will continue His

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[2] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 482.

[3] C. H. Wong, "*The Structure of John 17*," Verbum et Ecclesia 27, no. 1 (2006): 374–376.

[4] Richard Bauckham, *The Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 142–47.

work.[5]

As Andreas J. Köstenberger observes, "Jesus' prayer in John 17 is profoundly missional; it ties the unity of believers directly to their witness in the world."[6] Jesus' explicit intercession for future believers presupposes the continuation of faith through testimony and proclamation, confirming that mission is intrinsic to the life of the church. For this reason, Jesus' prayer is ultimately missional in nature. Moreover, the unity of believers is not an end in itself but serves the missional purpose "so that the world may believe" (v.21). In a similar vein, Craig S. Keener states, "The thrust of Jesus' prayer is that disciples are to communicate the saving message to those who would come after them… therefore, the prayer is also a mandate for mission and disciple-making (cf. Matt 28:19)."[7] Unity, therefore, functions not merely as an internal virtue but as a public testimony to the truth of the gospel.

The significance of this passage for New Hope Global Methodist Church is unmistakable. Within a congregation marked by diversity of vision, culture, and lived experience, Jesus' prayer provides a theological framework for understanding unity not as uniformity, but as shared participation in the life and mission of God. In a world increasingly fractured by political, cultural, and social division, the visible unity of believers bears powerful witness to the reconciling work of Christ. When those outside the faith observe believers loving one another and remaining united amid difference, the

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[5] F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 329–30.

[6] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 205.

[7] Craig S. Keener*, The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1062.

church itself becomes a living proclamation of the gospel. As D.A. Carson points out, "Oneness of the community of believers is modeled on the interrelationship of the Father and the Son… The divided and hostile world desperately needs the unifying power of the gospel of love."[8]

An Exegesis of John 17:19-23

Background of the book of John

The Gospel of John, positioned as the fourth Gospel in the New Testament canon, has always held a distinct and esteemed place among the Gospels. Origen described it as "the firstfruits of the Gospels," considering it the most spiritual of the four.[9] Clement of Alexandria likewise called it "the spiritual Gospel," reflecting its theological depth and unique Christological focus.[10] Notably, the Gospel of John is associated with the earliest known New Testament manuscript fragment, the Rylands Library Papyrus P52, dated to approximately A.D. 125-150, which contains verses from John 18 and attests to the Gospel's early circulation.[11]

Traditionally, the authorship of the Gospel has been attributed to John, the son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve Apostles. Many conservative scholars continue to hold this

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[8] D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 568.

[9] Origen, *Commentary on John, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, ed. Allan Menzies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 371.

[10] Clement of Alexandria, *cited in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7, trans. Kirsopp Lake, LCL 153 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 1:542.

[11] C.H. Roberts, *An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), 10–11.

view, though the Gospel never explicitly names John as its author. While "the sons of Zebedee" are mentioned in John 21:2, no individual author is identified by name. The earliest Greek manuscripts of the Gospel circulated without a formal title, and it was not until the late second century that the designation "According to John" became attached.[12] This has led some modern scholars, such as Richard Bauckham, to suggest that the "Beloved Disciple" may have been another historical figure, perhaps John the Elder.[13]

According to Mike Mazzalongo, the former Dean of Student at Oklahoma Christian University and the founder of the Bible Teaching platform BibleTalk.tv, there are recurring themes in the Gospel of John: (1) the proof of Jesus as the Messiah, (2) the response of those who believe the proof, and (3) the response of unbelievers.[14] Jesus bears witness to Himself as the Messiah through His words, signs, and miracles, and the narrative consistently portrays the emergence of those who believe and follow Him. Conversely, the Gospel also depicts those who refuse belief, actively oppose Jesus, or persecute His followers. These themes recur throughout the Gospel of John, shaping its theological and narrative coherence. Passages such as John 9:22, 12:42, and 16:3 indicate that the earliest Johannine community remained deeply rooted in Jewish tradition while simultaneously experiencing exclusion from the synagogue due to their confession of Jesus as the Messiah.[15]

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[12] Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 302.

[13] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 390–92.

[14] Mike Mazzalongo, "John's Witness (John 1:19–34 Bible Study)," YouTube video, posted February 17, 2018, https://youtu.be/On_bpEMvlEA (accessed March 4, 2025).

[15] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (Anchor Bible 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 374–76.

Furthermore, many of Jesus' contemporaries interpreted His mission in purely political terms, expecting Him to liberate Israel from Roman domination. This misinterpretation obscured the universal scope of Jesus' salvific mission and contributed to misunderstanding, division, betrayal, and rejection within the community. Against this backdrop, Jesus prayed for His disciples' unity, that they might be one just as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). As Andreas Köstenberger explains, "The unity Jesus envisions is not organizational but theological, rooted in the oneness of the Father and the Son.[16] When such unity is lived out in love, the world comes to recognize that the Father sent the Son and that His love is real (John 17:23). In this sense, unity becomes not merely an internal characteristic of the believing community but a form of lived evangelism, serving as a visible witness to the truth of the Gospel. This theological vision undergirds my hope for New Hope GMC – that our unity, grounded in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit, will function as a living testimony to the surrounding community.

The Prayer of Jesus for all Future Disciples (17:20)

John 17:20 marks the third division of Jesus' high priestly prayer, shifting from His intercession for His disciples to His prayer for all who would come to faith through their testimony. This section carries two significant implications for believers. First, Jesus' prayer is explicitly directed toward all future believers – the collective body of Christ across history. It is essential to recognize that this is not only a distant, general prayer for "other," but also a deeply personal intercession for every disciple who would ever believe

[16] Köstenberger, *John*, 498.

in Him. The reality that Jesus, the Creator of the universe and the One who conquered death, is praying for us should inspire profound encouragement and hope. F.F. Bruce vividly describes this scene: "Like a mountaineer gazing out across the expanding vista as range succeeds range into the distant horizon, so Jesus gazes out across the rolling centuries. He beholds and embraces the harvest of the age, the church of the Redeemer, gathered from every nation, people, language, and tribe. He is praying for us."[17]

Second, Jesus' prayer makes clear that the gospel is never meant to be hoarded; it is meant to be shared. His intercession for future disciples affirms that the mission of God extends through the witness of His people. As Craig Keener explains, "By praying for those who would believe through the apostles' word, Jesus affirms the continuity of mission – rooted in His own sending – and entrusts the task of making disciples to successive generation."[18] In this way, John 17 echoes the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, reminding the church of its calling to teach, baptize, and disciples all nations. John Chrysostom captured this missional dimension when he wrote: "By this again He revived their souls, showing that the disciples should be many… He comforteth them by showing that they were being made the cause of the salvation of others."[19] This reinforces the theological truth that Christian faith is inherently outward facing rather than self-enclosed. We are not saved for ourselves alone, but for the sake of others. D.A. Carson underscores this point: "Christian unity is never to be mistaken for mere uniformity or

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[17] F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 335.

[18] Keener, *Gospel of John*, 425.

[19] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, NPNF 1.14, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 313.

institutional unity; rather it is grounded in adherence to the truth revealed in Christ and the love that flows from it."[20]

This truth is particularly relevant for New Hope GMC. In just one year, many new members have joined, yet much of the congregation's energy has been directed inward – toward preserving leadership structures and guarding influence – rather than outward toward making disciples. Such inward focus reflects a functional loss of the missional orientation for which Jesus explicitly prayed. As Andreas Köstenberger reminds us, "The mission of Jesus' disciples, as described in John 17, is directly tied to their sanctification and unity, which serve as powerful testimonies to the truth of the Gospel in the world."[21] If New Hope GMC is to answer Jesus' prayer, it must look beyond its walls and engage in the mission of God with renewed passion and Spirit-led courage.

Unity (17:21-23)

As the number of believers increases, differences in culture, language, and background inevitably emerge. Jesus appears to anticipate this reality, which explains why the central theme of His prayer for future disciples is unity. This unity is not superficial agreement, but a profound expression of God's work through His people in the world. Marianne Meye Thompson cautions that the unity envisioned in John 17 cannot be reduced to structural cohesion or institutional alignment. Rather, it reflects a shared identity rooted in relationship with the triune God. Such unity allows diversity to flourish without devolving into fragmentation because its source is participation in God's

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[20] Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 572.

[21] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 498.

own life.[22] The unity Jesus describe is not modeled after human institutions or political alliances, but after the relationship between the Father and the Son. Drawing on John 17:20-23, Lumley emphasizes that the unity for which Jesus prays is not merely functional or emotional togetherness, but also a profound participation in the relational unity of the Father and the Son, into which believers are drawn as Christ's body.[23]

This is a spiritual unity – a unity that transcends ethnicity, preference, and personal interest – rooted in the shared indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Kenneth Barker observes, "The absolute oneness of the Father and the Son will now be spiritually transferred to believers for a specific purpose – spiritual unity."[24] This unity is grounded not in our will, but in the will of God, expressed through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul echoes this vision in his call for believers to be "united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10), a unity characterized by profound love and fellowship within the life of the Triune God. Bill Easum challenges church leaders to reflect this reality: "Leader, submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ… This obedience of Christ, which was so pleasing to God, must become the heart and soul of our Christian walk."[25] This insight has deeply shaped my own pastoral leadership, reminding me that genuine unity within the church cannot be sustained by human authority or organizational strategy, but must flow from a leader's humble submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

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[22] Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 367–71.

[23] Mary-Anne Lumley, "*That All May Be One*," Pastoral Liturgy 52, no. 2 (2022): 2.

[24] Kenneth L. Barker, *John* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 217.

[25] Bill Easum, *A Second Resurrection* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 56.

Regrettably, when churches lose sight of the spiritual nature of unity, they can devolve into functioning as businesses or social clubs rather than communities of faith. In my ministry as a presiding elder, I have observed churches that, after leaving the United Methodist Church, adopted governance structures resembling corporate boards, often marginalizing Spirit-led discernment and broader congregational participation. This tendency reflects what Graham Standish warns against when he describes a mechanistic understanding of the church. Drawing on church-growth researcher Bill Easum, Standish explains that this perspective treats the church as an organizational system to be managed rather than a spiritual community shaped by the work of the Holy Spirit.[26]

Unity in John 17 is fundamentally missional. Missiologist Lesslie Newbigin argues that the unity of the church is not merely an internal concern but a crucial element of the church's witness to the world.[27] When the church is divided, it undermines the credibility of the gospel it proclaims. Instead, the church's visible unity should function as a sign pointing toward God's reconciling work in Christ and the ultimate restoration of humanity. Similarly, Darrell Guder emphasizes that a truly missional community embodies the reconciliation it proclaims.[28] The church's life together should demonstrate the reality of the gospel through relationships marked by forgiveness, humility, and shared mission. For New Hope GMC, this means moving beyond power struggles and cultural divides toward a Spirit-enabled oneness that itself becomes a testimony to the gospel. Christopher J. H. Wright likewise highlights that unity is intrinsic to the nature of

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[26] Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005), 52.

[27] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 245.

[28] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 11.

the gospel and therefore essential for the church's mission in the world.[29] In contexts shaped by secularization, social fragmentation, or conflict, the pursuit of Christian unity becomes not only a pastoral concern but also a matter of theological faithfulness and missional credibility.[30] Michael J. Wilkins emphasizes that Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17 is inseparable from discipleship and public witness.[31] The visible oneness of believers serves as a powerful sign to the world of the transforming power of life in Christ.

Holy Spirit – Indwelling Spirit (17:21-23)

In John 17:21-23, one of the most repeated ideas is that the Father is "in" the Son, and the Son is "in" the Father. This language of mutual indwelling describes the intimate, inseparable relationship within the Trinity – a relationship into which believers are invited through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus frequently used relational imagery to communicate this reality, such as the Good Shepherd and His sheep (John 10:14-16) or the True Vine and its branches (John 15:1-8). As Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain argue, the mutual indwelling language of John's Gospel reflects a deeply Trinitarian pattern in which believers are drawn into the communion shared by the Father and the Son through the Spirit. Unity, therefore, is participatory rather than merely organizational; it is rooted in the life of God Himself.[32] The latter image especially captures the organic, life-sustaining union between Christ and His people: the branch

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[29] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 264.

[30] Stéphanie Dietrich, "*God's Mission as a Call for Transforming Unity*," International Review of Mission 107, no. 2 (2018): 387–388.

[31] Michael J. Wilkins, *John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 469–72.

[32] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 178–83.

cannot live or bear fruit apart from the vine. Gerald Borchert notes, "The oneness or unity here… is rooted in the idea of 'indwelling' in the Godhead and calls to mind the major focus of the indwelling pictured in the vine and branches core text of the Farewell Cycle."[33]

This indwelling is not merely an abstract theological concept but also the practical basis for spiritual unity. Without the Holy Spirit living within us, we cannot hope to overcome our natural divisions or achieve the unity for which Jesus prayed. As Paul writes, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). Craig Keener observes that this shift from external worship in a temple to internal communion with God marks "a radical transformation in worship, moving from external rituals to a direct, internal communion with God.[34]

Before Pentecost, God chose specific individuals according to His purpose and poured out the Holy Spirit upon them. After Jesus' ascension, however, the Holy Spirit is given to all believers without distinction. Through the Spirit's indwelling, believers themselves have now become the dwelling place of God (Eph. 2:22). This means that God's presence is no longer tied to a location but is carried by His people into every context and culture. Jürgen Moltmann emphasizes, "The church is the church of the Holy Spirit, or it is not the church at all… For the Spirit actualizes the fellowship of believers with the triune God and with one another."[35]

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[33] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, NAC 25B (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2002), 204.

[34] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1074.

[35] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 64.

This truth should shape the identity and mission of New Hope GMC. Our unity is not the result of human compromise but is formed solely by our shared participation in the life of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Stanley Ott notes that Spirit-filled congregations "create a climate of possibility… a sense of community and communion that binds people to God and each other."[36] A Spirit-led church listens for God's voice in decision-making, welcome the exercise of diverse spiritual gifts, and resists the temptation to reduce ministry to mere programs or administration. For New Hope GMC, this means allowing the Spirit to transform not only worship practices but relational dynamics. The Spirit unites us in one body, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6), empowering us to transcend ethnic, cultural, and generational barriers. When we yield to the Spirit's guidance, our unity becomes both the evidence and the instrument of God's mission in the world.

The Sent One (John 17:21-23)

Jesus explicitly states the purpose of this unity in verse 21: "that the world may believe that you have sent me." Here, unity is not an end in itself but the means by which the mission of God is made powerful and visible. N. T. Wright similarly contends that the unity of God's people serves as a sign of the new creation inaugurated in Christ. When believers embody reconciled relationships across cultural and social divides, they bear witness to the covenant faithfulness of God and anticipate the restoration of all things.[37] The unity of believers has a missional intent: it is designed to reveal to the world the

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[36] Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 142.

[37] N. T. Wright, *Into the Heart of Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 86–92.

divine sending of the Son. As the world is marked by fragmentation and division, the supernatural oneness of the church becomes a living sign of the reconciling power of the Gospel. F. F. Bruce explains that the unity of the church should be visible and tangible in such a way that it leads the world to believe in Christ. Just as Jesus revealed the invisible God through His incarnation, the church is called to reflect and make known the Father and His love to the world through its shared life.[38]

This is why believing in Jesus as the One sent by the Father is so central to our mission. Without recognizing His divine commissioning, the world cannot fully grasp the depth of His love. According to Andreas Köstenberger, the unity of Jesus' disciples is inseparable from their mission, because the shared life of believers provides a powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel.[39] The credibility of the church's witness, therefore, depends not only on proclamation but on embodied communal life. Acts 1:8 reinforces this connection between sending and empowerment: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Here, the Spirit's indwelling presence is not given primarily for personal comfort or private spirituality, but to equip believers for global witness. Eckhard Schnabel emphasizes that the church is fundamentally defined by its participation in mission, and when it abandons that calling, it loses sight of what it is meant to be.[40]

Unfortunately, many congregations today embrace the idea of being "called" by God but fail to live as those who are also sent by God. This inward focus often results in

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[38] F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 344.

[39] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 498.

[40] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 28.

congregations that keep their resources – time, finances, and energy – locked within their own wall. Christopher J. H. Wright warns, "A church that ceases to be a missional church is in danger of ceasing to be the church at all."[41] For New Hope GMC, this call to be the "sent ones" must shape our very identity. Unity and love within the congregation are not private virtues but public signs pointing to the truth of the gospel. Darrell L. Guder explains that the church itself is not the ultimate goal of the gospel. Rather, the church exists to serve the gospel by living as a community that bears witness to the reign of God.[42]

Practically, this involves intentional local outreach, support for global missions, and equipping members to live as witnesses in daily life. When unity, Spirit-empowerment, and missional sending converge, the church becomes the living embodiment of Jesus' prayer.

Conclusion

John 17:20-23 reveals the heartbeat of Jesus for His people across all generations. His prayer is not merely for organizational harmony but for a spiritual oneness grounded in the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This unity is missional in purpose – it exists so that the world will believe that the Father has sent the Son and that His love is real, visible, and transformative. Unity among believers is not a peripheral matter but lies at

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[41] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

[42] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 82.

the heart of the church's witness to the world.[43] In this passage, unity, Spirit-empowerment, and missional sending are inseparably linked. Michael J. Gorman argues that the church is called not merely to proclaim the gospel but to "become the gospel" it announces. When believers live in reconciled unity shaped by the cross and empowered by the Spirit, the church itself becomes a visible embodiment of God's reconciling mission in the world.[44] The Father sent the Son; the Son sends the church; and the Spirit empowers the mission. This trinitarian pattern provides a theological blueprint for a faithful missional church. The church exists not for itself but as a visible sign of God's kingdom and a foretaste of the redemption yet to come.[45]

For New Hope GMC, the challenge and opportunity lie in embodying this prayer. In a congregation marked by diversity – racially, culturally, and generationally – Jesus' call to unity is both urgent and necessary. Our unity is not for comfort or self-preservation but for the sake of God's mission. When we choose love over division and mission over self-interest, we become a living testimony of the gospel to a fragmented world.

Application to the New Hope Global Methodist Church

The biblical foundation of John 17:19-23 speaks directly to the present realities of New Hope GMC. As a young congregation in its formative years, we are in the critical

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[43] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 568.

[44] Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 221–29.

[45] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 122.

stage of shaping our communal identity, fostering Spirit-led unity, and embracing our missional calling.

First, unity must be intentionally cultivated. This unity is not mere agreement on policies or personal preferences; it is a shared participation in the life of God through the Holy Spirit. Andreas Köstenberger points out that the unity of believers reflects the unity shared between the Father and the Son, grounded in a common life, mission, and love.[46] New Hope GMC must regularly call its members to prayer, mutual submission to Christ, and reconciliation, ensuring that differences do not derail the mission.

Second, the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence must be central. Without the Spirit's active work, attempts at unity will collapse into either forced uniformity or fragile consensus. Jürgen Moltmann cautions that when the church ceases to be continually renewed by the Holy Spirit, it risks becoming merely a religious institution instead of the living body of Christ.[47] Worship led by the Holy Spirit, discernment in decision-making under the Spirit's guidance, and the free exercise of diverse spiritual gifts within the Spirit are essential practices that keep the church vibrant and missional.

Third, the identity of being a "sent" people must be embraced. Jesus' prayer makes clear that our unity exists for the sake of the world's belief. This means New Hope GMC must resist inward-focused maintenance and instead prioritize outward-focused mission. Darrell Guder states, "The church does not have a mission; the mission of God has a church."[48] New Hope GMC must therefore resist inward maintenance and prioritize

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[46] Köstenberger, *John*, 498.

[47] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

[48] Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 82.

outward engagement. This includes strengthening local partnerships, supporting global mission, and equipping every member for daily witness.

If New Hope GMC can hold unity, Spirit-empowerment, and missional sending together—as Jesus prayed—it will not only navigate its internal challenges but also become a credible and compelling witness of God's reconciling love. Such unity is not uniformity or the absence of disagreement, but a Spirit-formed communion rooted in shared participation in the life and mission of the triune God. When believers are sanctified in truth, indwelt and guided by the Holy Spirit, and sent together into the world, their common life becomes a visible sign that Christ has indeed been sent by the Father. In this way, the church's unity becomes missional, its diversity becomes a testimony rather than a threat, and its worship overflows into faithful witness. This is not merely pastoral aspiration or strategic optimism; it is the expressed will of Christ for His church, revealed in His own intercession and grounded in the promise of God's faithful presence.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In January 1907, an extraordinary spiritual awakening occurred in Pyongyang, Korea. During a routine evening prayer service at Jangdaehyeon Church, a Korean elder named Gil Seon-ju stood before the congregation and publicly confessed his sin before God. He described his guilt as spiritual adultery and compared himself to Achan in the Old Testament, whose hidden sin brought defeat upon Israel (Joshua 7). His confession deeply moved the congregation and triggered a powerful response among those present. Soon, many believers began openly confessing their own sins, weeping, and seeking reconciliation with those they had wronged.

What made this moment particularly remarkable was the social diversity of the participants. Men and women, Western missionaries and Korean Christians, and people from sharply different social classes gathered together in repentance. Among them were members of the yangban, the traditional Korean aristocratic ruling class during the Joseon dynasty, as well as individuals from the lowest social classes, including those who had previously lived as servants or slaves. In a society long divided by rigid Confucian hierarchies, such public repentance and reconciliation across social boundaries was unprecedented. The service continued through the night and into the early hours of the

morning. Eyewitnesses later recalled that the atmosphere was filled with intense prayer and repentance, and some reported that "the floor of the church was wet with tears."[1]

This event, now known as the Pyongyang Great Revival of 1907, transformed Korean Christianity and left an indelible mark on global Pentecostalism. Yet the revival did not emerge suddenly or in isolation. It was the culmination of earlier Spirit-led movements beginning with the Wonsan Revival of 1903, developing through years of sustained prayer and missionary collaboration.[2] What made the Pyongyang Revival historically significant was not innovative methodology or charismatic personalities but the unmistakable pattern of the Holy Spirit's work: deep conviction of sin, public confession and restitution, reconciliation across rigid social barriers, and explosive missional momentum.[3]

The historical context makes the revival's impact even more remarkable. Korea in the early twentieth century was a nation in crisis. Political instability following the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the collapse of traditional Confucian social structures, and mounting pressure from Japanese imperial expansion created an atmosphere of fear and fragmentation.[4] Korean society was deeply divided along lines of class (yangban

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[1] Willis, John. "A Report on the Pyongyang Revival." *American Outlook* 3, no. 7 (1907): 33–48, quote on 41.

[2] Chil-sung Kim, *The Wonsan Revival and the Pyongyang Great Revival: A Historical Analysis*, *Journal of Korean Church History* 15, no. 3 (2015): 45–67.

[3] Yong-kyu Park, *The History of Korean Christianity and Revival Movements* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 2012), 187–215.

[4] Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History*, updated ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 140–165.

nobility vs. commoners), gender (strict Confucian separation of men and women), region (north vs. south), and emerging ideological factions (traditionalists vs. modernizers).[5]

Into this volatile context, the Holy Spirit brought not political revolution but spiritual transformation. The revival was characterized by what missiologist Andrew Walls calls the gospel's "infinite translatability" – its capacity to cross cultural boundaries and unite diverse peoples in Christ.[6] Men and women who would never have spoken publicly in mixed company confessed sins together. Social elites and laborers embraced as brothers and sisters. Missionaries and Korean believers wept and prayed side by side. This supernatural unity became the foundation for one of the most powerful missionary movements in modern church history.

This chapter examines the Pyongyang Revival as a historical model of the missional church, demonstrating how Spirit-formed unity emerges amid deep social fragmentation and how the church's identity as "sent people" generated transformative impact. The chapter unfolds chronologically, tracing the revival from its roots in Wonsan (1903) through the pivotal events of 1906-1907 in Pyongyang, and culminating in the nationwide Million Souls Movement (1909-1910). Three defining characteristics emerge from this historical analysis: (1) the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, (2) unity among believers across social divides, and (3) the church's identity as a community sent into the world. These characteristics will serve as the historical-theological lens through which the revival is interpreted and as the constructive bridge to the contemporary challenges faced by the New Hope Global Methodist Church.

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[5] James H. Grayson, *Korea: A Religious History*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 152–158.

[6] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 7–9.

Timeline of the Korean Revival Movement (1903-1910)

To understand the Pyongyang Revival in its full context, a clear chronological framework is essential:

> 1903 – Wonsan Revival begins in November under the ministry of Robert A. Hardie; characterized by deep repentance and confession among missionaries and Korean believers.
> 1904 – Revival spreads from Wonsan to Gangwon Providence (Sasulmak Church), then to Songdo and Seoul; crosses denominational lines from Southern Methodist to Northen Methodist and Presbyterian churches.
> 1904-1905 – Robert Hardie takes sabbatical; revival continues and deepens, demonstrating that it is a work of the Spirit, not dependent on one leader.
> August-September 1906 – Pyongyang Missionary Conference; Hardie teaches on the Holy Spirit, laying theological groundwork for revival.
> Late 1906 – Seoul Missionary Conference; Howard Agnew Johnston shares testimonies from Welsh Revival and India, inspiring Korean leaders.
> January 2-15, 1907 – Pyeongannamdo Presbytery meeting at Jangdaehyeon Church in Pyongyang hosted by Graham Lee.
> January 14, 1907 – Gil Seon-ju's public confession; revival breaks out with intensity.
> January 15, 1907 – Evening service after Graham Lee's message; corporate prayer (tongsung gido) erupts; 600 remain after dismissal confessing sins through the night.
> Spring-Summer 1907 – Revival spreads throughout Korea, crossing denominational, regional, and social boundaries; Pyongyang becomes known as "the Jerusalem of the East".
> 1909-1910 – Million Souls Movement launched; Korean Christians systematically evangelize the peninsula, distributing hundreds of thousands of Bibles and tracts, establishing new churches across the nation.[7]

This timeline reveals that the Pyongyang Revival was not an isolated event but the apex of a sustained movement of the Holy Spirit that transformed Korean Christianity and positioned the Korean church for explosive growth throughout the twentieth century.

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[7] This timeline is synthesized from multiple sources: Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 187–250; L. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910*, 4th ed. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1987), 341–389; Sihyo Lee, "An Analysis of Weakening Factors of Social Reform Persistency in The Great Revival Movement of Pyongyang," *Theology and Society* 33, no. 1 (2019): 97–122.

The Roots: The Wonsan Revival (1903)

The story begins not in Pyongyang but in Wonsan, a coastal city in what is now North Korea. In November 1903, Southern Methodist missionaries Miss Arrena Carroll and Miss Mary H. Knowles hosted a prayer meeting at their mission station. What began as a small gathering of missionaries and a few Korean believers soon grew into something far more significant. The diversity of those who attended was itself remarkable in the rigidly stratified Korean society: gentry and laborers, widows and schoolchildren, Western missionaries and their families, all gathered to seek God's presence.[8]

Miss Josephine Hounshell, one of the participants, later testified that "the Holy Spirit came into our minds" with such clarity and power that it felt as if the Mount of Transfiguration had descended upon them.[9] The emphasis was not on ecstatic experiences but on deep conviction of sin and genuine repentance. Robert A. Hardie, a medical missionary who became a central figure in the movement, described the revival as marked by "convicting and sanctifying power" that swept across Korea for several years.[10]

The Wonsan Revival demonstrated two characteristics that Jonathan Edwards, in reflecting on the Great Awakening in colonial America, identified as marks of authentic spiritual awakening: diversity and expansion.[11] Edwards observed that true revivals touch

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[8] Robert A. Hardie, *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings Which Followed* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1908), 15–18.

[9] Quoted in Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 189.

[10] Hardie, *Korean Pentecost*, 19.

[11] Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (London: John Oswald, 1737), 11–15.

people across every social stratum – "sober and vicious, high and low, rich and poor, wise and unwise" – and that they rapidly spread beyond their initial location.[12] The Wonsan movement fulfilled both criteria.

By early 1904, the Spirit's fire had spread to Gangwon Province. At Sasulmak Church, twelve days of revival meetings saw hardened hearts softened, stolen goods returned, and conversions among those previously unmoved by Christian preaching.[13] From there, the revival touched Songdo, Seoul, and beyond. Reverend Willard Glidden Cram described how Korean believer encountered truths "they had never realized before – such as the power of the Gospel, the true meaning of sin, the experience of the new birth, and the filling of the Holy Spirit."[14]

Significantly, the revival continued and even deepened during Hardie's sabbatical in 1904-1905. This demonstrated that the movement was not the product of one man's charisma or organizational skill but the sovereign work of God's Spirit. As Hardie himself later reflected, "The Great Revival began in Wonsan in 1903 and culminated in Pyongyang in 1907.[15] The Spirit was preparing the ground, building momentum, and forming a people who would carry the gospel to every corner of Korea.

Preparing the Way: The Conference of 1906

By 1906, revival currents were converging in Pyongyang, the strategic hub of Northern Presbyterian and Methodist mission work. Two major conferences that year

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[12] Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, 13.

[13] Hardie, *Korean Pentecost*, 22–24.

[14] Quoted in Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 355.

[15] Hardie, *Korean Pentecost*, 25.

helped consolidate theological emphasis, intensify spiritual expectancy, and provide a wider frame of reference for interpreting revival as a Spirit-led work rather than a humanly orchestrated program.

The Pyongyang Missionary Conference (August-September 1906)

From August 26 to September 2, 1906, Pyongyang hosted a major gathering of missionaries and Korean church leaders. Robert Hardie served as the keynote speaker, delivering expositions from 1 John that were less theological lectures than personal testimonies of brokenness and transformation. Among those present were leading pastos like Gil Seon-ju of Jangdaehyeon Church and young observers such as twelve-year-old Sherwood Hall, son of missionaries Rosetta and William Hall.[16]

Hardie's central message challenged both missionaries and Korean believers to recognize their utter dependance on the Holy Spirit. He declared:

> Once we recognize before God that we cannot implement our ideas, aspirations, and resolutions through the power of our human flesh alone, we must open our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit… Even the highest ideals are difficult to fulfill without spiritual strength… our spiritual strength can only be maintained through daily prayer.[17]

This emphasis on total surrender and continual dependance on the Spirit echoes the theology of Andrew Murray, the South African pastor and writer whose works on prayer and the Spirit-filled life had deeply influenced Hardie. Murray insisted that the Spirit's fullness is given "not to the self-sufficient, but to the one who lives in daily

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[16] Sherwood Hall, *With Stethoscope in Asia: Korea* (McLean, VA: MCL Associates, 1978), 23–27.

[17] Hardie, quoted in Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 201.

dependance upon the living Christ."[18] Hardie's teaching prepared the ground by cultivating spiritual hunger and humility – essential conditions for revival.

The Seoul Missionary Conference (Late 1906)

Shortly after Pyongyang conference, a similar gathering took place in Seoul with Howard Agnew Johnston as the principal speaker. Johnston brought vivid firsthand accounts from the Welsh Revival (1904-1905) and its extension into Kashi, India, where he had recently witnessed extraordinary movements of God's Spirit.[19] His passionate appeal for "revivalists after the pattern of Evan Roberts" stirred deep longing among Korean believers, particularly Elder Gil Seon-ju, who offered himself fully to God's service.[20]

This cross-pollination of revival narratives – Wales to India to Korea – illustrates what missiologist Andrew Walls calls the "serial" nature of Christian expansion: the gospel moves along relational lines of witness and imitation, igniting new fires as testimonies are shared across cultural boundaries.[21] The Welsh Revival's emphasis on confession, prayer, and Spirit-empowerment found resonant soil in Korean Christianity, where Confucian traditions of communal harmony and moral introspection could be baptized into Christian practice.

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[18] Andrew Murray, *The Spirit of Christ* (1888; repr., New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984), 237.

[19] Howard Agnew Johnston, *Revivals in Wales and India: A Comparative Study* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 78–112.

[20] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 203.

[21] Walls, *Missionary Movement*, 16–25.

These conferences did not only manufacture revival, but also they cultivated expectancy. Believers began to pray with greater intensity, asking God to do in Korea what He had done in Wales and India. That stage was set for an outpouring that would exceed anything yet witnessed.

The Pyongyang Explosion (1907)

Gil Seon-ju: The Flame Bearer

No figure looms larger in the Pyongyang Revival than Gil Seon-ju. Born into a traditional Korean religious context, Gil's spiritual journey had led him through intense personal disciplines before encountering Christ through the witness of a friend and the reading of Chrisitan literature. Baptized in 1897, he quickly emerged as a lay leader of uncommon passion, traveling widely to preach the gospel even while suffering from near-blindness.[22]

Korean church historians regard Gil as arguably the greatest evangelist the Korean church has ever produced.[23] His spiritual intensity was matched by his willingness to be vulnerable. On January 14, 1907, a pivotal moment occurred during a prayer meeting at Jangdaehyeon Church in Pyongyang when elder Gil Seon-ju rose before the congregation and acknowledged his sin before God. He admitted that hidden sin within the community could hinder God's work and called the congregation to

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[22] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 363–365.

[23] Oak Sung-Deuk, *The Making of Korean Christianity: Protestant Encounters with Korean Religions, 1876-1915* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 217.

repentance. This confession was not merely symbolic; Gil named specific failures and openly acknowledged his unworthiness to lead God's people.[24]

What followed was unprecedented. In a Confucian society where preserving "face" (social honor) was paramount and where men and women were rigidly separated in public, believers began openly confessing sins before the entire congregation. Historian Myung-soo Park observes that such vulnerability was nothing short of miraculous given Korean cultural norms.[25] Men confessed lying, stealing, and adultery. Women confessed bitterness, gossip, and idolatry. Enemies reconciled. Debts were repaid. The community experienced what the New Testament describes in Acts 2: conviction of sin, repentance, and Spirit-empowered witness emerging from a cleansed community.

Gil's ministry after 1907 spread the revival's fire throughout Korea, intertwining evangelism with social transformation. His later involvement in the March 1st Independence Movement of 1919 revealed his conviction that the gospel carries implications for justice and national liberation, not merely individual salvation.[26] Yet his primary identity remained that of evangelist – one sent to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a nation in darkness.

Graham Lee: the Tireless Builder

Alongside Gil Seon-ju stood Graham Lee, a Presbyterian missionary who had co-founded the Pyongyang Mission and planted multiple congregations throughout the

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[24] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 208–209.

[25] Myung-soo Park, quoted in Oak, *Making of Korean Christianity*, 218.

[26] Wi Jo Kang, *Christ and Caesar in Modern Korea: A History of Christianity and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 38–42.

region. Lee was deeply respected by both Koreans and fellow missionaries. An American journalist visiting Pyongyang in 1907 described Lee as "the spiritual father" of hundreds and noted his worn-out shoes as testimony to tireless service walking from village to village.[27]

From January 2-15, 1907, Lee hosted the annual Pyeongannamdo (South Pyongan Province) Presbytery meeting at Jangdaehyeon Church. On the evening of January 14 – the same day Gil Seon-ju made his confession – Lee delivered a brief message and then invited attendees to pray together in the Korean style known as tongsung gido: corporate prayer offered aloud simultaneously by all present.[28]

What happened next defied explanation apart from the Spirit's sovereign work. As hundreds of voices rose together in prayer, the sound became like "the roar of many waters." The sound of sobbing and cries for mercy mingled with prayers of confession and intercession. The prayer continued for hours, some accounts saying it lasted until dawn.[29] The following evening, after another service, 600 people remained in the church building, unwilling to leave as confession after confession poured forth. One participant testified, "It seemed as if the very floor of the church was wet with tears.[30]

This pattern of corporate prayer and public confession repeated across Pyongyan and then radiated to rural towns, women's gatherings, and even schools. Classes at the Pyongyang Theological Seminary were suspended so that students could devote

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[27] Quoted in William N. Blair and Bruce F. Hunt, *The Korean Pentecost and the Sufferings Which Followed* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 63.

[28] On *tongsung gido*, see Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 107.

[29] Blair and Hunt, *Korean Pentecost*, 65.

[30] Willis, "Report on the Pyongyang Revival," 41.

themselves to prayer and repentance.[31] The revival had become not a controlled program but an unstoppable movement of the Holy Spirit.

The Impact of the Pyongyang Revival (1907-1910)

By Spiring 1907, the revival had crossed denominational boundaries, to touching Methodists, Presbyterians and Holiness churches alike. What made this expansion particularly significant was not merely its geographic reach but its capacity to overcome Korea's deeply entrenched social divisions.

Social Transformation

Korean society in 1907 operated under rigid hierarchies inherited from centuries of Confucian influence. They yangban (aristocratic class) considered themselves inherently superior to commoners. Men and women occupied separate social spheres and rarely interacted publicly. Regional identities (particularly north vs. south) created mutual suspicion and rivalry. Yet in the revival, these barriers crumbled.[32]

Former yangban nobles and former slaves confessed sins to one another and embraced as brothers in Christ. Men and women prayed together in services, breaking the Confucian taboo of gender separation. Northern and southern Koreans discovered common identity in the gospel. Western missionaries and Korean believers wept together, acknowledging mutual failures and committing to mutual service.[33]

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[31] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 211.

[32] Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 108–110.

[33] Oak, *Making of Korean Christianity*, 219–222.

This social miracle did not escape the notice of Korean observers. Pyongyang, previously known for moral corruption and prostitution, gained a new reputation as "the Jerusalem of the East."[34] Secular newspapers reported on the changed atmosphere in the city: decreased crime, increased honesty in business dealings, reconciled families, and growing numbers attending churches.[35] The revival demonstrated what Lesslie Newbigin would later emphasize: the gospel is both personal and public truth, bringing individual salvation while reshaping the ethos of entire communities.[36]

Geographic Expansion

From Pyongyang, the revival spread with remarkable speed:

Northern provinces: Throughout Pyeongan Province and into Hamgyong Province, churches experienced similar outpourings of repentance and renewal. Missionaries reported that in town after town, the pattern repeated: conviction of sin, confession, restitution, and renewed commitment to holy living.[37]

Central Korea: Seoul and surrounding areas saw revival break out in both Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The Sangdong Church in Seoul, under the leadership of Pastor Kil Seon-ju's colleagues, experienced weeks of sustained prayer meetings and confession services.[38]

Southern Regions: Though the revival's epicenter remained in the north, southern cities including Daegu, Busan, and Gwangju also experienced significant spiritual awakening, with hundreds coming to faith and existing believers experiencing renewed passion for Christ.[39]

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[34] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 379.

[35] Detailed in Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 215–218.

[36] Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 222–233.

[37] Blair and Hunt, *Korean Pentecost*, 72–78.

[38] Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 111.

[39] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 382–385.

> Rural Areas: Perhaps most remarkably, the revival was not confined to urban centers. Korean believers carried the fire to rural villages, often walking for days to share testimonies and pray with isolated Christian communities. This rural penetration would prove crucial for the church's resilience during later periods of persecution.[40]

Statistical evidence, though incomplete, suggests the revival's massive impact. Church membership in Korea grew from approximately 30,000 in 1906 to over 200,000 by 1910.[41] The number of churches increased from roughly 600 to over 2,000 in the same period.[42] More significantly, the quality of Chrisitan commitment deepened: regular prayer meetings, systematic Bible study, and commitment to evangelism became normative rather than exceptional among Korean believers.[43]

The Million Souls Movement (1909-1910)

The revival's most enduring legacy may be the Million Souls Movement, a systematic evangelistic campaign that mobilized ordinary Korean Christians to reach their entire nation with the gospel. Launched in 1909 and intensified through 1910, the movement demonstrated how Spirit-formed unity naturally generates missional momentum.[44]

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[40] Oak, *Making of Korean Christianity*, 225–227.

[41] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 386; Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 113.

[42] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 386; Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 113.

[43] Donald N. Clark, *Living Dangerously in Korea: The Western Experience 1900-1950* (Norwalk, CT: EastBridge, 2003), 89–92.

[44] On the Million Souls Movement, see Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, vol. 2: 1500-1900* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 441–445.

Organization and Strategy

The Million Souls Movement was coordinated through a network of churches, mission stations, and regional associations, but its genius lay in mobilizing laypeople rather than relying solely on clergy or professional missionaries. The basic organizational unit was the local church, which divided its surrounding area into districts and assigned believers to systematically visit every home, share the gospel, distribute Christian literature, and invite people to church.[45]

Each participating church received:

Bibles and portions of Scripture translated into Korean
Gospel tracts explaining the Christian message in culturally accessible language
Training materials for personal evangelism
Prayer guides to intercede for specific individuals and communities
Reporting forms to track progress and share testimonies[46]

The movement's name – "Million Souls" – reflected both ambitious vision and theological conviction. Organizers believed that Korean's population of approximately thirteen million could be reached for Christ within a generation if believers took seriously their calling as witnesses.[47] The target was not to secure one million conversations immediately but to ensure that one million Koreans heard a clear presentation of the gospel through personal encounter with a Christian believer.[48]

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[45] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 388–389.

[46] Details from contemporary missionary reports compiled in Blair and Hunt, *Korean Pentecost*, 81–84.

[47] Moffett, *Christianity in Asia*, 442.

[48] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 233.

Implementation and Results

Korean Christians threw themselves into the campaign with extraordinary zeal. Laypeople took time off from work to travel to distant villages. Women organized evangelistic teams despite social restrictions on their public activity. Students used school holidays to conduct door-to-door campaigns. Elderly believers who could not travel became intercessors, praying systematically through lists of unreached towns and villages.[49]

The Movement distributed approximately 200,000 Bibles and 500,000 gospel tracts between 1909 and 1910.[50] While exact conversion numbers are impossible to verify, missionary reports and Korean church records suggest that tens of thousands came to faith during this period.[51] More importantly, the movement established Christianity as a permanent presence throughout Korea, no longer confined to a few urban centers or mission station.

Mission historian Samuel Moffett observed that "it was not foreign missionaries who spearheaded this campaign but ordinary Korean Christians, aflame with a sense of divine calling."[52] This indigenous character distinguished the Korean movement from many Western missionary efforts of the same era, where evangelism remained primarily the work of foreign professionals. Korean believers had internalized what John 20:21 teaches: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." They understood themselves as a sent people, commissioned by Christ to carry the gospel to their neighbors.

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[49] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 234–237.

[50] Paik, *Protestant Missions in Korea*, 389; Moffett, *Christianity in Asia*, 443.

[51] Estimates vary; see discussion in Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 115–116.

[52] Moffett, *Christianity in Asia*, 444.

Three Characteristics of the Missional Church Revealed in the Pyongyang Revival

Having traced the historical development of the revival movement, we can now identify three defining characteristics that remain relevant for contemporary missional ecclesiology.

The Centrality of the Holy Spirit

From Wonsan to Pyongyang, the common denominator was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. While leaders like Robert Hardie, Gil Seon-ju, and Graham Lee played important roles, the movement's continuation and expansion even in their absence demonstrated that revival was not humanly engineered.[53]

This observation aligns with Jonathan Edwards' eighteenth-century reflections on revival. Edwards emphasized that genuine spiritual awakening always transcends human planning because it is grounded in divine initiative: "It is the influence of the Spirit of God that alone can produce a saving change in the soul."[54] Timothy Tennent echoes this conviction in his analysis of global revivals: "In every authentic revival in history, God's Spirit takes the lead, and human agents become instruments rather than architects.[55]

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[53] Park, *History of Korean Christianity*, 240.

[54] Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 23.

[55] Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2010), 272.

The fruit of the Pyongyang Revival confirms the Spirit's work. J. Edwin Orr warns against reducing revival to "religious excitement" or "emotional contagion."[56] The test is whether the movement produces lasting transformation. In Korea, the fruit was unmistakable: reconciled relationships, restitution of stolen goods, renewed obedience to Scripture, sustained prayer, and missionary zeal that continued for decades.[57]

Unity Across Social Divides

The revival's most remarkable social fruit was the deep unity it produced among believers. Korean society's entrenched divisions – class stratification from the yangban system, gender segregation reinforced by Confucian norms, regional rivalries – seemed insurmountable. Yet the Holy Spirit created supernatural bonds.[58]

This unity was not achieved through human compromise or institutional merger but through shared participation in repentance and mission. When believers confessed sins together and served together in evangelism, their differences became secondary to their common identity in Christ.[59] As discussed in Chapter Two, this fulfills Jesus' prayer in John 17:23 that believers would be "perfect into one" so that the world would know God's love.

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[56] J. Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue: The Impact of Twentieth Century Revivals* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 15–17.

[57] Oak, *Making of Korean Christianity*, 228–230.

[58] Kim and Kim, *History of Korean Christianity*, 108–110.

[59] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 125–131.

Identity as the Sent One

The third characteristic was the church's awakening to its apostolic identity. The Pyongyang revival did not gather believers simply to enjoy spiritual experiences; the Spirit sent them out. As repentance deepened, urgency to reach the lost intensified. The Million Souls Movement emerged as one of the most visible fruits of the Pyongyang Revival, embodying this missional impulse: Korean Christians recognized that they existed not for their own sake but for the sake of those who did not yet know Christ.[60] This pattern reflects John 20:21 – "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Michael Goheen observes that "the missional church is not defined by its seating capacity but by its sending capacity."[61] The Pyongyang believers embodied this truth, crossing geographic, social, and denominational boundaries to bear witness to Christ.

Conclusion

The Pyongyang Revival of 1907 stands as one of the most significant spiritual awakenings in modern church history. Emerging from the earlier Wonsan Revival of 1903 and shaped by sustained prayer, missionary collaboration, and cultural openness to the Spirit's work, the movement transformed Korean Christianity and positioned the Korean church for explosive growth throughout the twentieth century.

The revival was characterized by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, producing deep conviction of sin, public confession and restitution, reconciliation across rigid social barriers, and explosive missional momentum. It demonstrated that when the Spirit moves,

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[60] Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 6.

[61] Goheen, *Light to the Nations*, 159.

human divisions crumble: yangban aristocrats and former slaves, men and women, Koreans and Westerners discovered unity in Christ that their culture deemed impossible.

Most significantly, the revival awakened the Korean church to its apostolic identity. Believers understood themselves not as passive recipients of ministry but as active participants in God's mission. The Million Souls Movement as a great fruit of Pyongyang revival (1909-1910) mobilized ordinary Christians to systematically evangelize the entire peninsula, distributing hundreds of thousands of Bibles and tracts, establishing new churches, and creating a missionary culture that would endure through decades of persecution and eventually make Korea one of the World's leading missionary-sending nations.

For New Hope Global Methodist Church, the Pyongyang Revival provides both inspiration and practical guidance. Like early twentieth-century Korea, New Hope exists in a context of cultural diversity, social transition, and institutional uncertainty. The congregation's tensions between founding members and newer participants echo the social divisions that the Korean church overcame through the Spirit's work. The Pyongyang Revival demonstrates that genuine unity does not emerge merely through organizational restructuring or human negotiation, but through repentance, prayer, and a renewed participation in God's mission. This historical example illustrates how spiritual renewal can transform relational conflict into missional cooperation. For this reason, the Pyongyang Revival offers an important historical model for this study, showing how Spirit-led repentance, communal prayer, and outward-focused mission can restore unity within a divided church and mobilize believers for participation in God's redemptive work.

The lessons are clear: transformation begins with dependence on the Holy Spirit cultivated through corporate prayer and vulnerable confession. Unity emerges through shared participation in mission rather than through institutional management. Apostolic identity is formed when believers recognize that the church exists not for itself but for the sake of those who do not yet know Christ.

As New Hope continues implementing the Missional Church Workshop and embodying the practices modeled in Pyongyang – Spirit-dependent prayer, cross-cultural collaboration, and neighbor-focused mission – the congregation moves from being a church with conflicts toward becoming a church on mission. The Spirit who united Korean believers across yangban and commoner lines can unite New Hope across cultural and generational lines. The same Spirit who sent Korean Christians into villages and towns throughout the peninsula can send New Hope members into neighborhoods and workplaces throughout Aroostook County. The transformation that turned Pyongyang into "the Jerusalem of the East" can make New Hope a beacon of reconciliation and mission in northern Maine.

This is not triumphalism but hope grounded in historical precedent and theological conviction. The God who moved in Pyongyang is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His Spirit still convicts, reconciles, and sends. Our task is not to manufacture revival but to position ourselves – through prayer, repentance, and obedience – to receive what only the Spirit can give.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

What is the church? This seemingly simple question has generated centuries of theological reflection, yet in contemporary North American Christianity, confusion about the church's fundamental identity has contributed to institutional decline, missional drift, and internal fragmentation. In many congregations, the question of identity has been displaced by concerns for survival, relevance, or organizational stability. Many congregations no longer understand why they exist. They treat mission as one program among many – a departmental concern relegated to occasional fundraising appeals or short-term mission trips – rather than recognizing mission as the church's very essence and reason for being.

Charles Van Engen's seminal work *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* offers a theological corrective to this widespread confusion. Van Engen argues that the church does not merely *have* a mission; rather, the church *is* mission.[1] This theological claim is not rhetorical flourish but a fundamental assertion about ecclesiology: the nature of the church and the mission of God (*missio Dei*) cannot be separated. Van Engen writes, "The Church is God's appointed means for the extension

[1] Charles E. Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 71.

of God's reign in the world... The mission of the Church, therefore, is not one of many tasks the Church performs. Rather, mission defines the Church."[2]

This perspective fundamentally reorients how congregations understand themselves. Instead of viewing mission as an external activity – something the church does out there when it sends missionaries or supports benevolence projects – Van Engen insists that mission is internal to the church's identity. Mission is not added to the church; it flows from what the church already is by virtue of its participation in the triune God's sending life. The church exists because God is a sending God. The Father sent the Son; the Father and Son sent the Spirit; and the triune God sends the church into the world as the visible, embodied continuation of Christ's reconciling work.[3] As Lesslie Newbigin similarly mentions, "The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning."[4]

When churches forget this foundational truth, they lose their theological center of gravity. Congregations begin defining themselves by secondary characteristics – worship style, building maintenance, social programs, or denominational identity – rather than by participation in God's redemptive mission. This loss of missional identity frequently manifests in two related symptoms: first, congregations turn inward, focusing energy on institutional self-preservation rather than neighbor love and evangelism; second, congregations fracture into competing factions as members compete for power and

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[2] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 73.

[3] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 77-81.

[4] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 119.

influence in the absence of a shared, transcendent purpose.[5] In such contexts, conflict becomes intensified because it is no longer ordered toward a common missional telos.

This chapter argues that recovering the church's missional identity requires reclaiming the classical theological marks of the church – oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity – as inherently missional realities rather than static institutional attributes. Drawing primarily on Van Engen's missional ecclesiology, and engaging Pauline theology in Ephesians alongside historical-theological reflection, this chapter demonstrates that the four marks are not decorative theological labels but lived expressions of the church's participation in the *missio Dei*. Within a confessional and practice-based framework, the marks function not only as doctrinal affirmations but as formative commitments shaping the church's common life. For New Hope GMC to move from division toward unity, the congregation must rediscover that it exists not for itself but as God's missionary people sent into the world.

Van Engen's Missional Ecclesiology: The Church as God's Missionary People

Charles Van Engen's theological contribution lies in his insistence that ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) and missiology (the theology of mission) must be integrated and not treated as separate theological disciplines. Writing against the backdrop of declining mainline Protestant denominations in North America, Van Engen observed that most congregations operate with what he calls a "come-structure" rather than a "go-structure."[6] This structural orientation subtly but powerfully reshapes how

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[5] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 85-89.

[6] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 99-103.

churches imagine faithfulness. In other words, churches design their ministry around the assumption that seekers will come to church buildings, attend worship services, and eventually join the institution. Mission, in this framework, becomes something specialists do overseas while the local congregation focuses on maintaining religious services for existing members.

Van Engen argues that this model contradicts the New Testament vision of the church. The apostolic church understood itself as a "sent" community, continuing the mission of Jesus who declared, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).[7] The church's identity is therefore missiological from the beginning. Its existence is derivative and responsive, grounded in God's prior sending action rather than in human initiative. It exists not to gather and preserve itself but to be scattered as salt, light, and leaven in the world (Matthew 5:13-16; 13:33).[8] Van Engen writes:

> The Church is called to be in the world for the sake of the world. The Church is not an end in itself... The local congregation discovers its true identity as it participates in God's mission of transforming persons, relationships, and social structures through the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[9]

This theological perspective has profound implications for how congregations approach their internal life. If the church is fundamentally a missionary people, then worship, fellowship, discipleship, governance, and stewardship must all serve the church's missional vocation. Van Engen notes that when congregations lose sight of this missionary purpose, they inevitably turn inward and become social clubs organized

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[7] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 105.

[8] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 107-110.

[9] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 112.

around member preferences rather than communities organized around God's redemptive purposes.[10] Missional amnesia thus produces ecclesial narcissism.

Van Engen's framework also challenges how churches handle diversity and conflict. In a consumer-driven ecclesiology, diversity becomes a problem to manage: different people have different preferences, and the church tries to accommodate everyone or risks losing members. However, in a missional ecclesiology, diversity is reframed as a strategic gift from God. A congregation that includes people from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds reflects the universal scope of God's kingdom and possesses richer resources for contextualizing the gospel in diverse settings.[11] Conflict, rather than being avoided at all costs, becomes an opportunity for growth as the community learns to subordinate personal preferences to the shared mission. Such conflict is not erased but re-narrated within a larger story of participation in God's work.

For New Hope GMC, Van Engen's theology provides a diagnostic lens and a hopeful path forward. The tensions between founding members and newer participants are not primarily personality clashes or cultural misunderstandings, though those elements are present. At a deeper level, these tensions reveal competing ecclesiological assumptions about ownership, authority, and purpose. Founding members still operate with a proprietary mindset – 'we built this church, therefore we control it' – while newer members feel like outsiders trying to gain entry into an established institution. Both groups need a theological reorientation: the church does not belong to any human group;

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[10] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 115-118.

[11] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 121-125.

it belongs to God and exists for God's mission. When this confessional truth is embraced, power struggles are relativized by shared obedience to Christ's sending call.

Van Engen's theology also clarifies the pastoral task. As founding pastor of New Hope GMC, a pastor's role is not to broker compromises between competing interest groups or to manage the church like a business negotiating between stakeholders. Rather, the pastor's calling is to help the entire congregation rediscover its fundamental identity and purpose. This task is inherently theological before it is managerial. It requires patient teaching, intentional formation, and the cultivation of practices that embody missional identity – prayer for the lost, evangelistic witness, cross-cultural ministry, and service to the marginalized. When a congregation begins to see itself as sent by God into a particular place for the sake of those who do not yet know Christ, internal divisions lose their power.

The remainder of this chapter demonstrates how the classical marks of the church, oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, are not abstract theological concepts but also concrete expressions of the church's missional identity. Properly interpreted, these marks function as both doctrinal anchors and practical guides for ecclesial life. These marks, properly understood, provide both the theological vision and the practical framework for fostering unity at New Hope GMC.

The Four Marks as Missional Realities

The confession that the church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" originates in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 CE) and has been affirmed across Christian

traditions for over sixteen centuries.[12] Yet these marks are often treated as descriptive labels – characteristics the church possesses – rather than as dynamic realities the church must continually embody through participation in God's mission. When reduced to static attributes, the marks risk becoming abstract ideals rather than formative commitments shaping ecclesial life. Van Engen insists that the four marks are inherently missional: they describe not what the church is in static terms, but what the church is called to become as it lives into its identity as God's missionary people.[13]

This section traces how each mark has been understood historically, how it has been distorted or lost in various periods of church history, and how recovering a missional interpretation of these marks can guide New Hope GMC toward greater faithfulness within its specific cultural and congregational context.

Oneness: Unity as Missional Witness

The church's oneness has both a theological and a practical dimension. Theologically, the church is one because Christ is one. The Apostle Paul declares, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Ecclesial unity is therefore grounded in divine initiative rather than human consensus. This unity is not something believers create but something they receive as a gift of the Spirit.[14] The church's oneness reflects the unity of the triune

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[12] J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Continuum, 1972), 296-331.

[13] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 130-135.

[14] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 89-92.

God and participates in the mutual indwelling (perichoresis) of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[15]

Practically, however, the church's unity must be visibly embodied. Jesus prayed that his followers "may all be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Unity is therefore more than an internal benefit for believers; it is an essential component of the church's missionary witness. Unity functions sacramentally, making visible the reconciling work God is accomplishing in Christ. When the watching world sees Christians from diverse backgrounds loving one another and living in reconciled community, that visible unity authenticates the gospel's claim that God is reconciling all things in Christ.[16]

Throughout church history, the mark of oneness has been repeatedly threatened and fragmented. The Great Schism of 1054 divided Eastern Orthodoxy from Western Catholicism over theological, cultural, and political disputes.[17] The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century further fractured Western Christianity into competing confessional traditions.[18] In the modern era, denominationalism has multiplied Christian divisions to the point where the World Christian Encyclopedia identifies over 45,000 distinct Christian denominations globally.[19] Such fragmentation poses a

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[15] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 191-213.

[16] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 227-233.

[17] Henry Chadwick, *East and West: The Making of a Rift in the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-35.

[18] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 99-128.

[19] Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 4.

significant challenge to the church's public credibility and missional coherence. Each division weakens the church's missionary credibility.

Karl Barth lamented this fragmentation, writing, "We cannot justify, spiritually or biblically, the existence of a plurality of churches genuinely separated and mutually excluding one another internally and therefore externally. A plurality of churches in this sense means a plurality of lords, a plurality of spirits, a plurality of gods."[20] Barth's critique is not merely institutional but theological: division within the body of Christ implicitly denies the Lordship of the one Christ. For Barth, ecclesial division is ultimately a failure of obedience rather than organization.

Van Engen argues that recovering the mark of oneness requires churches to recognize that unity is not uniformity.[21] Congregations need not erase cultural, liturgical, or theological diversity to be one in Christ. Rather, unity is found in shared participation in God's mission. Mission provides the telos around which diversity is ordered rather than eliminated. When believers from different backgrounds unite around the common purpose of making disciples and bearing witness to the gospel, their diversity enriches rather than threatens their oneness.[22]

At New Hope GMC, the challenge of oneness is acute. Founding members and newer participants bring different histories, expectations, and visions for the church. A consumer ecclesiology would view this diversity as a problem requiring either assimilation (newcomers must conform to the founders' lead) or segmentation (create

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[20] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 675.

[21] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 145-148.

[22] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 150-152.

separate services or ministries for different groups). However, Van Engen's missional ecclesiology offers a third way: unite around shared mission. This approach reframes identity from ownership to participation in God's work. When both groups understand their shared calling as co-laborers in God's harvest field, their differences are transformed into complementary gifts that strengthen the church's mission.

As pastor, the role of mediator involves constantly redirecting attention away from internal disputes and toward external mission. For example, when conflicts arose over worship style or decision-making processes, the pastor has intentionally shifted the conversation by asking, "How does this decision help us reach our neighbors with the gospel?" or "What do non-believers in Presque Isle need to see from this church?" These missional questions reframe disagreements, helping members recognize that the church exists for those who are not yet part of it. Such reframing moves the congregation from positional conflict toward shared discernment.

One concrete practice has been organizing mission projects that require collaboration between founding members and newer participants. When different groups serve together – whether preparing meals for Korean Buffet, visiting Homeless shelter, or serving the Messy Church (children's program)—they discover shared purpose and begin to see one another as partners rather than rivals. This embodied unity, formed through shared mission, becomes a powerful witness to the congregation and the wider community.

Holiness: Set Apart for God's Purposes

The church's holiness flows from God's holiness. The people of God are called to be holy because God is holy (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16).[23] In the Old Testament, holiness was primarily about separation—Israel was set apart from the nations for Yahweh's purposes. In the New Testament, holiness retains this sense of being set apart but is also deeply relational: believers are sanctified through union with Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.[24] Holiness thus becomes participatory rather than merely prohibitive.

Van Engen emphasizes that the church's holiness involves corporate missional distinctiveness as well as individual moral purity.[25] The church is called to embody an alternative way of life that stands in contrast to the brokenness, injustice, and idolatry of the surrounding culture. This holiness is not withdrawal from the world but rather engagement with the world from a position of distinct identity. The church's holiness renders it legible as a sign of God's reign. The church's holiness makes it visible and credible as a sign of God's kingdom. [26]

John Wesley's concept of "social holiness" captures this missional dimension well. Wesley argued that "the gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no

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[23] John Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 45-67.

[24] Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 207-211.

[25] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 156-160.

[26] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 162-165.

holiness but social holiness."[27] Holiness emerges within the community of believers through practices of mutual accountability, sacrificial love, and shared mission. The early Methodist class meetings embodied this vision, creating small groups where believers confessed sins, encouraged one another, and held each other accountable to Christian discipleship.[28]

Historically, the church has often distorted the mark of holiness in two opposite directions. One distortion is legalism: reducing holiness to rule-keeping and external conformity, often accompanied by judgmentalism toward those deemed less pure.[29] This distortion evacuates holiness of its missional content, turning the church inward and making it a club for the moral superior rather than a hospital for sinners. The other distortion is accommodation: so fully assimilating to cultural norms that the church becomes indistinguishable from the world and loses its prophetic voice.[30] Both distortions undermine the church's witness.

Van Engen calls the church to a third way: missional holiness. This means living as a redeemed community whose transformed life together makes the gospel visible and compelling. It means embodying forgiveness, generosity, hospitality, justice, and reconciliation in ways that provoke curiosity and invite questions from those outside the

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[27] John Wesley, Preface to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 14 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 321.

[28] David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 95-118.

[29] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 41-59.

[30] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 83-115.

church.[31] Within this framework, holiness is expressed through joyful obedience to God's reign, not moral superiority.

At New Hope GMC, holiness has practical implications for how the congregation navigates conflict. When disputes arise, the default response in many churches is to protect one's own interests, preserve one's reputation, or retaliate against perceived offenses. But holiness calls the community to a different standard. Paul writes, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who... emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Philippians 2:5-7). Holiness means practicing humility, confessing wrongs, extending forgiveness, and seeking reconciliation even when it is costly.

Van Engen notes that missional churches are communities that "practice the presence of God" through habitual rhythms of repentance, worship, and obedience.[32] At New Hope GMC, we have begun incorporating regular times of corporate confession into our weekly prayer meeting and small group meetings, creating space for the Holy Spirit to search hearts and heal relationships. This embodied holiness strengthens the congregation's internal life while also becoming a witness to the wider community.

Catholicity: Universal Scope and Local Presence

The term "catholic" means "universal" or "according to the whole."[33] To confess that the church is catholic is to affirm that the body of Christ transcends every particular culture, nation, language, and historical moment. The church's catholicity is rooted in the universality of God's love and the scope of Christ's redemptive work: "For God so loved

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[31] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 168-172.

[32] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 175-178.

[33] Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 13-30.

the world" (John 3:16); Christ is "the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).[34]

Van Engen emphasizes that the church's catholicity is inherently missional.[35] Because God's love extends to all people, the church is sent to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). The church cannot remain confined to one ethnic group, one social class, or one geographic region and still be faithful to its catholic identity. The Spirit drives the church outward, crossing boundaries and demolishing walls that divide humanity.[36]

The New Testament presents the church's catholicity as both a theological reality and a sociological miracle. At Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the gospel to be heard in multiple languages, signaling that the good news is for all people (Acts 2:5-11).[37] Paul's ministry to the Gentiles challenged the early church to recognize that God's people include Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female (Galatians 3:28).[38] The book of Revelation culminates with a vision of the redeemed from "every nation, tribe, people, and language" worshiping the Lamb (Revelation 7:9).[39]

Throughout church history, the mark of Catholicity has been both affirmed and violated. The early ecumenical councils sought to articulate a faith that could be received across cultural and linguistic boundaries, producing creeds and theological formulations

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[34] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 193-212.

[35] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 182-186.

[36] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 188-191.

[37] Justo L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 33-45.

[38] J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 374-383.

[39] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74-79.

that aimed for universal clarity.[40] Yet the church has also repeatedly failed to live out its catholic identity, often aligning with imperial power, colonialism, and cultural supremacy. Missionaries have sometimes confused the gospel with Western culture, imposing European or North American customs on new believers rather than allowing the gospel to be authentically incarnated in diverse cultural contexts.[41]

Missiologist Andrew Walls mentions that the church's catholicity is best expressed through what he calls the "indigenizing principle" and the "pilgrim principle."[42] The indigenizing principle means the gospel must be translated into every culture, taking root in local languages, symbols, and practices. The pilgrim principle means the church must never become so identified with one culture that it loses its prophetic edge and capacity to critique idolatry wherever it appears. Together, these principles allow the church to be both universal and particular, both global and local.[43]

Van Engen builds on this insight, arguing that catholicity is expressed when local congregations recognize their participation in the worldwide body of Christ and when they welcome diversity as a gift rather than a threat.[44] A truly catholic congregation embraces members from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, learning from their diverse perspectives and allowing the gospel to be enriched through cross-cultural encounter.

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[40] Frances M. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 23-47.

[41] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 29-53.

[42] Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 7-9.

[43] Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 16–25.

[44] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 195-199.

At New Hope GMC, the church's growing diversity is an opportunity to embody catholicity. The congregation includes people from Hawaii, Mexico, Korea, Hong Kong, and various parts of the United States, as well as African American families and multicultural households. This diversity is not accidental; it reflects God's providence and the Spirit's work in drawing people from many backgrounds into one body.

Yet this diversity also creates tension. Cultural differences in communication style, worship preferences, and decision-making processes can lead to misunderstanding. Founding members, who are predominantly long-time residents of Northern Maine, sometimes feel overwhelmed by the rapid influx of newcomers from different parts of the world. Newer members, in turn, sometimes feel that their perspectives are not valued or that they are expected to assimilate into an established culture rather than contributing to the church's ongoing formation.

In the role of mediator and pastor of New Hope GMC, this diversity has been reframed theologically. In sermons and teaching, I regularly emphasize that New Hope GMC's multicultural composition is not a problem to solve but a sign of God's kingdom. Passages such as Ephesians 2:14-16 emphasize how Christ "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" between Jews and Gentiles, creating "one new humanity." In this light, differences within the congregation are understood not only as obstacles to unity but also as opportunities to display the reconciling power of the gospel.

One practical step New Hope Global Methodist Church has taken to embody cultural diversity and foster unity is the intentional use of the Korean Buffet ministry as a space for relational and missional formation. Rather than functioning merely as a fundraising or fellowship event, the Korean Buffet has become a liturgical and communal

practice that expresses hospitality, mutual sharing, and cross-cultural engagement. Through this ministry, church members from different cultural backgrounds gather together, sharing food and stories. During these gatherings, participants are invited to testify about their faith journeys, cultural heritage, and experiences of encountering God in different contexts.

Apostolicity: Sent on Mission

The church's apostolicity has traditionally been understood in two ways: continuity with the teaching of the apostles and participation in the apostolic mission.[45] The first dimension emphasizes doctrinal faithfulness – the church remains apostolic by adhering to the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The second dimension emphasizes missional faithfulness – the church remains apostolic by continuing the sending work begun by Jesus and carried forward by the apostles.[46]

Van Engen explains that both dimensions are essential but that the latter has often been neglected in Western ecclesiology.[47] Many churches focus on preserving apostolic doctrine while forgetting that the apostles were not merely teachers but missionaries. The word "apostle" (*apostolos*) means "one who is sent."[48] To be an apostolic church is therefore to be a sent church, continuing the mission of proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, and extending God's reign in the world.

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[45] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (New York: Image Books, 2002), 185-190.

[46] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 372-378.

[47] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 203-207.

[48] Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 79-81.

The apostolic mission is rooted in the sending activity of the triune God. The Father sent the Son into the world (John 3:16-17). The Father and Son sent the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26). And now the triune God sends the church: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).[49] This sending is not optional but constitutive of the church's identity. A church that is not sent is not truly a church.[50]

Historically, the mark of apostolicity has been variously interpreted and contested. In Catholic and Orthodox traditions, apostolicity is often linked to apostolic succession – the belief that bishops stand in an unbroken line of ordination stretching back to the apostles.[51] In Protestant traditions, apostolicity is more commonly understood in terms of faithfulness to apostolic teaching as preserved in Scripture.[52] Both traditions, however, have sometimes emphasized institutional continuity or doctrinal purity at the expense of missional engagement.

Darrell Guder and the Gospel and Our Culture Network have called for a recovery of the church's apostolic mission in North America. Guder writes, "The church does not have a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; the church is mission."[53] This statement echoes Van Engen's central thesis and challenges congregations to stop treating mission as one department among many. Instead, every aspect of church life—worship,

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[49] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 62-67.

[50] Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 4-5.

[51] Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman Press, 2001), 13-38.

[52] Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 134-142.

[53] Guder, *Missional Church*, 6.

discipleship, governance, stewardship – must be oriented toward the church's apostolic calling to bear witness to Christ in the world.[54]

Van Engen highlights that apostolic mission includes both evangelism (proclamation of the gospel) and social transformation (demonstration of the gospel's implications for all of life).[55] The church is sent to announce good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). This holistic mission reflects the comprehensive scope of God's kingdom and challenges the false dichotomy between "spiritual" and "social" ministry that has plagued much of Western Christianity.[56]

At New Hope GMC, recovering the mark of apostolicity means helping the congregation see itself as a sent community. This requires shifting from a "come-structure" to a "go-structure," to use Van Engen's language. Instead of assuming that ministry happens primarily when people gather in the church building on Sunday morning, we must equip and empower members to live as missionaries in their daily contexts—workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and social networks.[57]

One concrete example from my pastoral ministry illustrates this shift. Early in my tenure at New Hope GMC, the congregation was heavily focused on internal concerns: maintaining the building, funding the budget, and providing programs for existing

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[54] Guder, *Missional Church*, 11-12.

[55] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 215-220.

[56] Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 157-182.

[57] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 224-228.

members. Outreach was minimal, and most members did not see evangelism or community engagement as part of their personal calling.

A sermon series on the church's apostolic identity emphasized that every believer is sent by Christ into the world. Passages such as Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 were explored, where Paul describes believers as "ambassadors for Christ." Mission was presented as the shared vocation of all the baptized rather than the exclusive work of ordained clergy or professional missionaries.

To make this teaching concrete, the congregation was challenged to identify specific people in their lives–neighbors, coworkers, and family members–who did not know Christ and to begin praying for opportunities to share the gospel with them. This practice shifted the congregation's focus outward and cultivated a sense of personal responsibility for mission.

We also initiated community service projects that embodied the church's apostolic mission. Members volunteered at the local homeless shelter, supported a pregnancy care center, and prepared for Korean Buffet together. These activities served practical needs while also creating opportunities for relational evangelism. As members engaged with their neighbors, they discovered natural openings to share their faith and invite people into the life of the church. As mediator, my role is to continually call the congregation back to its apostolic identity. When conflicts arise over internal matters–budgets, governance, worship styles–I remind members that these issues must be evaluated in light of the church's mission

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the church's identity is fundamentally missional and that the classical marks of the church—oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity – are not static attributes but dynamic realities that shape the church's participation in God's mission. Drawing primarily on Charles Van Engen's theology, this chapter has demonstrated that when congregations lose sight of their missional purpose, they turn inward, fragment into competing factions, and fail to bear credible witness to the gospel.

For New Hope Global Methodist Church, recovering a missional ecclesiology rooted in the four marks provides both theological clarity and practical direction. The congregation's tensions between founding members and newer participants are not primarily sociological problems requiring managerial solutions but theological challenges requiring spiritual formation. Unity, in this framework, emerges not from negotiation but from shared obedience to God's mission. When the church rediscovers its identity as God's missionary people – one in Christ, holy through the Spirit, catholic in scope, and apostolic in mission – divisions lose their power and diversity becomes a strategic gift.[58]

As founding pastor, the role of mediator is to shepherd the entire congregation into a deeper understanding of its God-given identity and calling. This requires patient teaching, intentional practices, and continual redirection of attention from internal concerns to external mission. When a congregation measures faithfulness through participation in God's redemptive work, unity emerges as a gift that grows out of shared obedience.

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[58] Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 98.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Contemporary congregations increasingly face complex challenges that cannot be addressed through theological reflection alone. Issues of conflict, organizational change, leadership adaptation, and relational fragmentation require tools that engage both spiritual discernment and social analysis. While Scripture and theology provide the church's foundational identity and mission, the lived realities of congregational life demand interpretive frameworks capable of addressing human behavior, group dynamics, and institutional transformation. Accordingly, this chapter employs a practice-based, confessional framework that understands congregational life as a locus of theological meaning, while simultaneously integrating rigorous social analysis; such an interdisciplinary approach is therefore indispensable for interpreting and guiding missional renewal in local church contexts.

Missional leadership theory, particularly as articulated by Alan J. Roxburgh, provides the primary framework for this project. Roxburgh emphasizes that the task of leadership is not primarily organizational management, but the cultivation of a missional imagination shaped by Scripture, communal discernment, and attentiveness to the work of the Holy Spirit. In this perspective, leaders help congregations learn to recognize where God is already at work in the world and to join that mission faithfully. Roxburgh's

approach highlights the importance of communal learning, spiritual discernment, and adaptive practices that enable churches to navigate seasons of transition and conflict while remaining rooted in God's mission.

Interestingly, insights from several scholars in organizational leadership and conflict studies resonate strongly with Roxburgh's missional leadership framework. Bruce Tuckman's model of group development—forming, storming, norming, and performing—reflects Roxburgh's recognition that conflict and tension are natural stages in communal growth rather than signs of failure.[1] Ronald Heifetz's distinction between technical and adaptive challenges also parallels Roxburgh's emphasis on deep transformation rather than superficial programmatic solutions.[2] Similarly, John Paul Lederach's work on conflict transformation aligns with Roxburgh's conviction that lasting renewal emerges through relational healing, patient dialogue, and long-term communal discernment.[3]

Together, these perspectives reinforce Roxburgh's central insight: congregational transformation requires more than institutional adjustments; it requires a community that learns to discern God's activity and participate together in God's mission. By bringing these complementary perspectives into conversation, this project seeks to illuminate practical pathways through which New Hope Global Methodist Church can cultivate unity, resilience, and faithful participation in God's redemptive work.

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[1] Bruce W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," Psychological Bulletin 63, no. 6 (1965): 384-399.

[2] Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 73–76.

[3] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 23–27.

An Analysis of Environmental Factors Affecting Missional Leadership

Change – Continuous vs. Discontinuous

Alan J. Roxburgh, in his work on missional leadership, makes a crucial distinction between change and transition – a distinction essential for understanding how congregations navigate conflict and transformation. He notes, "Change is what happens to us from forces outside ourselves over which we have no control. Most of us deal fairly well with continuous change, which is ongoing, gradual, and expected."[4] Continuous change usually refers to incremental adjustments within an existing framework. These are the predictable refinements that improve current structures without altering the core identity of an organization. For example, when a church enhances worship services by adding music or media while maintaining the same liturgical framework, the congregation experiences continuity and stability.

Discontinuous change, however, is fundamentally different. Roxburgh mentions, "Discontinuous change is much more disturbing and difficult. Unlike the continuous form, it creates a situation that requires something different from and more potent than the normal habits and skills that were so useful during a stable period of continuous change."[5] This kind of change disrupts long-established patterns and redefines identity, practices, and mission. Examples include a church transitioning from a hierarchical model to shared leadership, shifting from inward-focused ministries to outward-focused community engagement, or merging with another congregation. These changes demand

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[4] Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 9.

[5] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 9–10.

adaptive responses that go beyond technical fixes, requiring leaders and congregations to develop new ways of thinking and being.

William Bridges provides a helpful complement by distinguishing between change and transition. He defines change as situational—new policies, structures, or leadership shifts—while transition is "the psychological process people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation."[6] Transition is the inner work of reorientation, involving grief, resistance, and eventually acceptance. Without attending to transition, even the most strategically planned changes will fail, as people remain emotionally tethered to the past.

Ronald Heifetz describes this as the difference between technical and adaptive challenges.[7] Technical challenges can be solved with existing skills and strategies, but adaptive challenges – like those posed by discontinuous change—require new learning, values, and behaviors. For congregations, adaptive challenges often involve questions of identity: Who are we now? What is God calling us to become? In a confessional and practice-based framework, these identity questions are not merely organizational; they are theological questions about faithfulness, belonging, and mission.

Bruce Tuckman's well-known model of group development – forming, storming, norming, performing – also sheds light on how congregations respond to discontinuous change.[8] When new members join a church, the community initially enters a forming stage, full of hope but also uncertainty. Conflict inevitably emerges in the storming stage,

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[6] William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2009), 3.

[7] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 73–76.

[8] Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," 384–399.

as differing expectations, cultures, and leadership assumptions clash. Through intentional guidance, groups can move to norming, developing shared practices and trust, and ultimately reach performing, where collaboration flourishes and the mission is advanced. New Hope GMC, with its rapid growth and cultural diversification, currently exists in the tension between storming and norming. Without intentional leadership, the congregation risks becoming mired in conflict rather than moving forward into effective mission.

Taken together, Roxburgh's leadership theory confirms and reminds us that organizational change is not merely structural – it is deeply relational and emotional. Discontinuous change demands leaders who can guide their congregations not only through the external disruptions but also through the inner transitions of identity, trust, and community formation. For New Hope GMC, this means that addressing the founders' control and new members' frustrations requires more than policy adjustments; it requires patient leadership that can hold space for grief, mediate conflict, and shepherd the congregation toward a renewed missional identity.

The Need for Discontinuous Change with Transition

The conflict at New Hope GMC between its founders and new members exemplifies a context that requires not only discontinuous change but also a carefully managed transition process. The founders' insistence on retaining decision-making power has created a culture of exclusivity, limiting the participation of new members. At the same time, the newer members – representing diverse racial, cultural, and geographic backgrounds – are pressing for inclusion and collaboration. This clash has left the congregation divided, its missional identity obscured by internal power struggles. In a

practice-based theological frame, this conflict is not only a governance problem but also a formation problem: it reveals what the congregation presently loves, fears, and trusts.

A Concrete Example: The January 2024 Incident

The tension at New Hope GMC reached a critical point in January 2024, vividly illustrating the discontinuous change with transition. During this period, founding members prevented the newly elected lay leader and other committee chairpersons–who had been properly elected at the December 2023 Church Conference–from attending leadership meetings. The founding members insisted that no one outside their original group be involved in any church decisions, effectively excluding everyone who had joined after the initial church plant.

This situation was deeply painful and ironic. One of the primary reasons New Hope GMC had left the United Methodist Church was precisely because the conference had stripped members of their right to speak, their right to be informed, and their right to vote. Yet here were the founding members replicating the very behavior they had protested. The newly elected leaders–some of whom were multicultural families, recent relocators, or newer believers–felt betrayed and marginalized. Meanwhile, the founders operated from a mindset of control and preservation, viewing themselves as guardians of the church's original vision and fearing that newcomers would dilute or derail what they had sacrificed to build. This incident also exposes competing narratives of legitimacy – one grounded in origin and sacrifice, the other grounded in ecclesial membership and shared responsibility.

The discontinuous change experienced by New Hope GMC can also be interpreted through the language of leadership development theory. Such moments are often understood as a storming stage in which members compete for influence, test boundaries, resist authority structures, and struggle over questions of control and direction.[9] At the same time, this situation reflects an adaptive challenge rather than a technical one, meaning that the congregation's tensions cannot be resolved simply through new programs or administrative adjustments.[10] Instead, these dynamics require deeper transformation in values, relationships, and communal identity as the church learns to navigate change together.

Alan Roxburgh emphasizes that discontinuous change involves a redefinition of identity, practices, and mission.[11] For New Hope GMC, this means moving away from a hierarchical, founder-dominated model toward a participatory leadership structure that reflects the diversity of the congregation. Such change cannot be incremental; it requires a bold shift in the church's culture and governance.

Yet change cannot succeed unless it is accompanied by a process of transition.[12] Transition involves guiding people through the inner work of letting go, living in the in-between, and embracing a new beginning. Founders may feel that their legacy and influence are under threat, while new members may feel disillusioned by exclusion. Without intentional attention to these emotional and relational dynamics, structural change will only deepen the divisions.

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[9] Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," 386–388.

[10] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 73–76.

[11] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 11.

[12] Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 4–5.

Such situations represent adaptive challenges that require leaders to help people navigate loss while discovering new ways of being.[13] Adaptive leadership resists quick fixes and instead cultivates resilience, dialogue, and learning. For New Hope GMC, this means leaders must create spaces where founders can grieve the loss of control while envisioning a shared future, and where new members can voice their hopes and be recognized as equal participants.

A conflict transformation framework is particularly relevant here. True reconciliation involves more than resolving a dispute; it requires the transformation of relationships and structures over time.[14] At New Hope GMC, reconciliation will require founders to acknowledge the harm done by exclusion, new members to extend grace and patience, and the entire congregation to commit to a new covenant of shared leadership rooted in Scripture and the Spirit's guidance. In confessional terms, reconciliation must be tested not by the absence of disagreement but by the presence of repentance, truth-telling, and restored communion.

Here Bruce Tuckman's insight from storming to norming is vital.[15] New Hope GMC is currently in a storming phase, where conflict and misunderstanding dominate. A missional leader must not attempt to bypass this tension but rather work through it, guiding the church toward norming – where shared practices and trust can emerge. This requires both courage and patience, as conflict is reframed not as a destructive force but as the birthplace of new identity. Norming, in this context, is not mere procedural

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[13] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 250–276.

[14] Lederach, *Building Peace*, 23–27, 55–73.

[15] Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," 388–391.

alignment but the emergence of shared theological commitments enacted in congregational practices.

In sum, New Hope GMC cannot resolve its conflict with technical adjustments alone. The situation demands discontinuous change that reshapes structures and practices, alongside intentional transition work that addresses grief, fear, and identity. As Roxburgh notes, missional leadership is not about imposing solutions but cultivating an environment where God's Spirit can guide the community into new possibilities.[16] For New Hope GMC, this means embodying both structural innovation and relational healing so that the congregation can rediscover its unity and mission in Christ.

Biblical Leadership

Alan's Cultivating a Biblical Imagination

If discontinuous change and transition mark the external and internal challenges of New Hope GMC, then biblical leadership provides the theological grounding for navigating them. Alan Roxburgh insists that the role of the missional leader is not to provide quick solutions but to cultivate a biblical imagination – a way of seeing God's ongoing redemptive work in the midst of uncertainty.[17] This imagination enables leaders and congregations to discern the Spirit's presence, reframing conflict and loss as opportunities for renewal.

Roxburgh describes the leader's task as creating environments where God's people can hear and interpret the biblical narrative together. This practice equips the

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[16] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 27–31.

[17] Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 34–37.

church to live faithfully, not by clinging to past forms but by reimagining its future in light of Scripture. Walter Brueggemann calls this the prophetic imagination: the church's ability to envision an alternative reality shaped by God's promises rather than the anxiety of present circumstances.[18] For New Hope GMC, where founders and new members struggle to see a shared future, cultivating such imagination is essential.

Timothy Keller reinforces this idea by arguing that Scripture provides a framework for cultural renewal, enabling the church to speak with both faithfulness and relevance.[19] The biblical narrative is best understood not only as a distant past, but also as a living story that calls the church to embody God's kingdom in the present.[20] Leaders at New Hope GMC must therefore help both founders and newcomers to re-narrate their experiences of conflict within the larger story of God's reconciliation. This re-narration does not deny harm or minimize disagreement; it locates them within a larger account of repentance, forgiveness, and shared mission.

Practical steps might include sermon series that trace biblical themes of unity and mission, small groups that study Scripture through diverse cultural lenses, and communal prayer practices that draw members into God's story together. These practices anchor the church in the biblical narrative while opening its imagination to fresh possibilities.

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[18] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1–19.

[19] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 15–32.

[20] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 139–143.

Incarnation Leadership

Yet imagination alone is not enough. Roxburgh emphasizes that leadership must be incarnational, grounded in the reality that God is present in the most unexpected and seemingly hopeless places.[21] The incarnation reveals that God's transformative work often begins not in centers of power but in marginal, fragile, and conflicted communities. For New Hope GMC, this insight offers profound hope: the very conflict that seems to threaten its identity may be the ground where God's Spirit is most at work.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that the Incarnation means God does not remain distant from human suffering but enters it fully, bearing it in Christ.[22] Lesslie Newbigin adds that the church, as the body of Christ, must embody this incarnational presence in the world, serving as a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom.[23] For leaders, this means being present amid division, listening to pain, and modeling reconciliation.

At New Hope GMC, incarnational leadership involves more than managing conflict; it requires embodying Christ's humility and self-giving love. Founders must see that their legacy is honored not by control but by empowering the next generation. New members must experience that their inclusion is not token but integral to the life of the body. In this way, incarnational leadership becomes the bridge between discontinuous change and renewed mission.

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[21] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 55–58.

[22] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 45–60.

[23] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 222–233.

Ultimately, It Is the Missional Leader

The Character of a Missional Leader

At the heart of Roxburgh's framework lies a clear conviction: effective missional leadership depends not merely on strategies or programs but on the character of the leader.[24] A congregation facing discontinuous change and painful transitions will inevitably ask, explicitly or implicitly, whether its leader can be trusted to guide them into an uncertain future. Such trust cannot be demanded; it must be earned through integrity, presence, and authenticity.

Roxburgh explains that character is the convergence of one's deep hunger, personal identity, and divine calling, forming the bedrock of credibility in leadership.[25] This means that leaders cannot separate their inner life from their public ministry. Integrity lies at the heart of biblical leadership, requiring the alignment of personal character with public vocation.[26] Similarly, servant leadership reflects the model of Christ, in which humility and self-giving love replace ambition and control.[27]

At New Hope GMC, this emphasis on character is especially critical. The founders' anxieties about losing control and the newcomers' sense of exclusion cannot be addressed merely by policies or organizational restructuring. They must see a leader who

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[24] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 59.

[25] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 60–62.

[26] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 509–535.

[27] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 17–62.

models reconciliation, embodies humility, and demonstrates consistency in both word and deed. The character of the leader thus becomes the catalyst for the congregation to move beyond mistrust and rediscover its shared calling.

Personal Maturity

Personal maturity enables leaders to respond to conflict and uncertainty with wisdom rather than reaction. Roxburgh notes that cultivating a space for missional imagination requires leaders who are self-aware, authentic, and attentive to the lived realities of those they lead.[28] This kind of maturity allows leaders to resist quick fixes and instead hold space for deeper conversations.

Self-awareness complements maturity by enabling leaders to recognize their biases and limitations. Nouwen suggests that self-aware leaders embrace vulnerability, acknowledging their dependence on God and others.[29] At New Hope GMC, such maturity and self-awareness are indispensable. They allow the pastor to bridge divides between founders and new members, modeling humility while guiding the congregation toward unity. By admitting their own limitations, leaders create an atmosphere of mutual respect, encouraging members to see conflict not as a threat but as an opportunity for growth.

Conflict Management

Missional transformation inevitably places leaders in zones of high conflict. Roxburgh emphasizes that conflict must not be avoided but reframed as an opportunity

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[28] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 63.

[29] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 29–37.

for renewal.[30] Ronald Heifetz calls this adaptive leadership: the capacity to mobilize people to face tough realities while preserving core values.[31] John Stott adds that church leaders must approach conflict with patience and wisdom, avoiding coercion while shepherding people toward reconciliation.[32]

For New Hope GMC, where the central conflict revolves around power and exclusion, effective conflict management means guiding the church into inclusive decision-making processes. The leader must create spaces for dialogue where grievances can be aired honestly and reconciliation can begin. This approach reflects incarnational leadership: embodying Christ's humility while facilitating healing. By reframing conflict as a space for growth, leaders transform tension into a witness of the gospel's power to reconcile.

Personal Courage

Roxburgh claims that true leadership requires courage, often in the face of misunderstanding or opposition.[33] Courage is not recklessness but the willingness to take faithful risks for the sake of God's mission. Leaders must be willing to "stick their necks out," disrupting entrenched patterns when they no longer serve the church's calling.

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[30] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 65–67.

[31] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 126–128.

[32] John Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 125–141.

[33] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 68.

Bonhoeffer embodied such courage, standing firm against Nazism at great personal cost.[34] In a similar way, missional leaders today must sometimes confront unhealthy structures or traditions. At New Hope GMC, courage may require challenging founders' desire to monopolize leadership while also urging new members to embrace patience and grace. This courage does not come from personality alone but from deep trust in God's sovereignty. Leaders must embody this trust, showing the congregation that hope lies not in control but in faithful obedience.

Trustworthiness and Trusting

Finally, Roxburgh highlights trust as the glue that enables transformation.[35] Without it, no congregation can risk the vulnerability required to step into new territory. Trustworthiness is cultivated through consistency, transparency, and fairness. At the same time, leaders must also trust others, empowering them to take responsibility and contribute meaningfully.

Trust multiplies the speed of collaboration and reduces the cost of conflict.[36] At New Hope GMC, rebuilding trust between founders and new members is vital for creating a unified and mission-focused community. The existing tensions over control and inclusion can only be addressed through intentional efforts to restore confidence and transparency within the church.

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[34] Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 89–99.

[35] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *Missional Leader*, 69–71.

[36] Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 13–31.

A missional leader plays a pivotal role in this process by consistently demonstrating fairness, transparency, and humility. At the same time, empowering members to take on meaningful roles within the church affirms their value and fosters a sense of shared ownership in the mission. Through these actions, trust can be rebuilt, enabling the congregation to move forward together with renewed faith and purpose.

Foundation Papers and Integration

This research project integrates biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations to address the divisions at New Hope GMC. Rather than operating in isolation, these four foundations mutually reinforce one another, creating a comprehensive framework for missional transformation. In a practice-based and confessional approach, this integration also clarifies how theological claims are tested and refined through congregational practice and disciplined reflection on lived experience.

Biblical Foundation: Unity as Missional Purpose

The biblical foundation, rooted in John 17:20-23, establishes that unity among believers is not optional but essential to the church's witness. Jesus prayed that His followers would be "perfected into one" so that "the world may believe" (John 17:21, 23). This unity is modeled on the relationship between the Father and the Son and is made possible through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

For New Hope GMC, this biblical vision connects directly to Roxburgh's emphasis on incarnational leadership. Leaders are called to create environments where the Spirit can heal divisions and form missional unity. Practical applications include

communal prayer gatherings, storytelling sessions where members share their faith journeys, and mission-focused small groups that unite members in service. When the church embodies the unity Jesus prayed for, it becomes a credible witness to the reconciling power of the gospel.

Historical Foundation: The Spirit's Unifying Work

The Pyongyang Revival of 1907 demonstrates how the Holy Spirit can break down entrenched social barriers and mobilize diverse believers for mission. During this revival, Koreans from different classes, tribes, and denominations experienced profound unity through deep repentance, public confession, and shared commitment to evangelism.

Roxburgh's missional leadership framework aligns closely with the historical lessons of the Pyongyang Revival. Both emphasize that genuine transformation begins through humble dependence on the Spirit's sovereign work. For New Hope GMC, this means prioritizing prayer, creating space for confession and reconciliation, and trusting that the Spirit can unite founders and newcomers around a shared calling. Collaborative ministry projects and mission trips provide concrete opportunities for members to experience the Spirit's unifying power.

Theological Foundation: The Church as God's Missionary People

Charles Van Engen's theology emphasizes that the church is not merely engaged in mission – it is God's missionary people by identity. The four marks of the church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) are not abstract ideals but lived realities that shape the church's participation in God's mission.

Roxburgh's framework complements Van Engen's ecclesiology by showing how missional leaders cultivate environments where these marks can be embodied. Unity is formed through shared participation in God's mission. Holiness is expressed through communal practices of repentance and reconciliation. Catholicity is embraced as the church welcomes diversity as a gift. Apostolicity is lived out as the church sees itself as sent into the world.

For New Hope GMC, this integration means moving beyond internal disputes to embrace a shared identity as God's missionary people. Unity workshops, holiness covenant groups, and apostolic mission projects provide practical pathways for embodying these theological truths.

Interdisciplinary Foundation: Navigating Adaptive Change

The interdisciplinary foundation, grounded primarily in Roxburgh's missional leadership theory, provides practical tools for navigating the adaptive challenges facing New Hope GMC. Within this perspective, congregational conflict can be understood as a normal stage in the development of a community rather than evidence of institutional failure. Such tensions often arise as members negotiate identity, influence, and direction during periods of transition. At the same time, many of these challenges cannot be addressed through simple technical solutions or new programs; they require deeper shifts in values, relationships, and communal identity. Addressing these tensions therefore involves more than resolving immediate disputes, calling instead for a long-term process of relational healing, renewed trust, and structural adjustments that support the congregation's shared participation in God's mission.

Together, these insights reinforce Roxburgh's central conviction that missional leaders do not impose solutions but cultivate environments in which the Spirit guides the community into new possibilities. At New Hope GMC, this takes the form of patient pastoral presence, intentional dialogue, and shared missional practices that bring members together across differences and help the congregation rediscover its common calling in God's mission.

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary foundation of this paper demonstrates how biblical, theological, and historical insights, when combined with Alan J. Roxburgh's missional leadership framework, can address the relational and structural challenges faced by New Hope Global Methodist Church. The integration of these perspectives offers a holistic approach to fostering unity, renewing mission, and navigating the complexities of diversity and change within the congregation.

The biblical foundation of unity and reconciliation, exemplified by John 17:20-23, calls the church to embody Christ's prayer for oneness as a reflection of God's love and mission. This scriptural vision challenges leaders at New Hope GMC to prioritize relational healing and collaborative ministry. Practical applications such as communal prayer gatherings, storytelling sessions, and mission-oriented small groups align the church's internal dynamics with its divine purpose, helping members transcend their differences and embrace a shared identity in Christ.

The theological foundation emphasizes the church's identity as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These marks underscore the interconnectedness of unity, holiness, and

mission. Roxburgh's missional leadership principles – rooted in incarnational practices – resonate deeply with these theological imperatives. Leaders who embody humility, courage, and empathy can guide the congregation toward a renewed understanding of its identity and calling. Initiatives like unity workshops, holiness covenant groups, and apostolic mission projects provide practical means to integrate theological values into the life of the church, fostering spiritual growth and communal renewal.

The historical foundation, particularly the lessons of the Pyongyang Revival, underscores the transformative power of repentance, reliance on the Holy Spirit, and a unified commitment to mission. This historical perspective provides a blueprint for New Hope GMC to navigate its current challenges. By drawing on the revival's emphasis on spiritual renewal and communal reflection, the church can create spaces for confession, prayer, and reconciliation. These practices not only address immediate conflicts but also inspire the congregation to rediscover its missional purpose and engage actively with the surrounding community.

Roxburgh's missional leadership theory ties these foundational insights together, offering a framework for adaptive and incarnational leadership. The character traits of a missional leader – personal maturity, self-awareness, conflict management skills, trustworthiness, and courage – are essential for navigating discontinuous change and fostering unity. At New Hope GMC, leaders must step into the tension of the current conflict with empathy and resolve, embodying the values they seek to instill in others. Their incarnational presence serves as a catalyst for transformation, enabling the congregation to move beyond internal divisions and refocus on its calling to witness to God's kingdom.

This project's qualitative approach (interviews, surveys, and observations) is designed to surface how different groups within New Hope GMC narrate identity, belonging, and mission, and how these narratives shape patterns of trust, conflict, and participation. To strengthen methodological rigor, the analysis will attend to convergences and divergences across data sources (triangulation), clarify how themes are generated from the data, and specify how the researcher's pastoral role is handled reflexively to reduce bias and increase credibility.

By collecting and analyzing diverse perspectives, the church can identify patterns and themes that inform its strategies for integration and collaboration. The proposed solutions, such as the Missional Education Program, mission trip initiatives, and conflict resolution strategies, offer actionable steps for fostering a culture of unity and shared purpose. These practices are evaluated not merely by organizational efficiency but by theological congruence with the church's confessed identity as God's missionary people.

In conclusion, the integration of biblical, theological, and historical foundations with Roxburgh's missional leadership framework provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges at New Hope GMC. This interdisciplinary perspective not only resolves immediate conflicts but also equips the church to thrive as a unified and mission-focused community. By embracing these principles, New Hope GMC can model a vision of reconciliation and collaboration that inspires other congregations navigating similar challenges in a diverse and globalized world.

The findings of this paper highlight the transformative potential of missional leadership grounded in interdisciplinary insights. As New Hope GMC implements these strategies, it stands as a testament to the power of unity, holiness, and mission to

overcome division and advance God's redemptive work. Leaders who embody these values can inspire lasting change, guiding the church into a future that reflects the fullness of its identity as the body of Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the implementation and outcomes of the Missional Church Workshop conducted at New Hope Global Methodist Church. The purpose of the project was to explore whether a structured process of theological reflection, communal dialogue, and missional practice could foster greater unity within a culturally diverse congregation experiencing internal tension. Over the course of six sessions, participants engaged biblical teaching, group discussion, and reflective practices designed to help the congregation rediscover its shared identity and calling in God's mission.

Rather than approaching unity as a problem to be solved through organizational restructuring, the workshop sought to cultivate a deeper theological understanding of the church's missional identity. The guiding assumption of the project was that when a congregation begins to see itself as a community sent by God into the world, internal divisions can gradually give way to shared purpose. This chapter examines how participants responded to the workshop, what changes were observed in congregational dynamics, and what insights emerged regarding the relationship between missional formation and congregational unity.

Chapter Two established the biblical foundation for this project through exegesis of John 17:19-23, where Jesus prays that His followers would be "perfected into one" so

that "the world may believe" (John 17:21, 23). This unity, rooted in the Trinitarian relationship between Father and Son and empowered by the Holy Spirit, is not an optional enhancement to the church's life but essential to its missionary witness. Chapter Three traced the historical example of the Pyongyang Revival of 1907, demonstrating how the Holy Spirit breaks down entrenched social barriers – class divisions between yangban aristocrats and commoners, gender segregation, regional rivalries – to create supernatural unity that fuels missional momentum. Chapter Four articulated Charles Van Engen's theological vision of the church as fundamentally missional in nature, arguing that the four classical marks of the church (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) are not static institutional attributes, but dynamic realities lived out through participation in God's mission. Chapter Five integrated Alan Roxburgh's missional leadership theory, showing how discontinuous change requires leaders who cultivate biblical imagination, embody incarnational presence, and guide congregations through adaptive challenges rather than merely applying technical fixes.

Together, these chapters established a confessional and practice-based framework in which unity is treated not only as an organizational preference, but also as a theological imperative grounded in God's redemptive mission. These biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations converged in the design of a six-session Missional Church Workshop conducted over six weeks. The workshop brought together six adult participants representing both founding members and newer participants, diverse cultural backgrounds, and varying levels of theological education. Through teaching, small group discussion, corporate prayer, and culminating in a shared missional project, the workshop sought to reorient participants' understanding of the church's

identity and purpose. Rather than viewing the church as an institution to be controlled or a club to be joined, participants were invited to rediscover the church as God's missionary people, sent into the world as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom.

This chapter presents the findings from qualitative analysis of pre- and post-project surveys and individual interviews with the six participants. The data reveal significant transformation in five key areas: (1) understanding of "missional church," (2) sense of personal calling, (3) concrete participation in God's mission, (4) theological depth regarding the Holy Spirit's role in unity and diversity, and (5) assessment of New Hope GMC's missional identity. In keeping with qualitative and practical theology standards, the chapter also identifies unexpected findings, acknowledges limitations, and articulates implications for ongoing congregational formation.

Methodology

Methodological Framework

This project employed a qualitative research design appropriate for exploring the complex dynamics of congregational transformation. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to capturing the nuanced shifts in understanding, identity, and practice that characterize spiritual formation and ecclesial renewal. As John Creswell observes, qualitative research "involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach" that seeks to understand phenomena "in terms of the meanings people bring to them."[1] The goal was

[1] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 44.

to explore how participants experienced and made sense of the workshop's content and practices.

Methodologically, this study is situated within a practice-based theological framework, in which lived congregational experience functions as a site of theological reflection rather than as data detached from faith commitments. The analysis therefore attends not only to behavioral change but also to shifts in theological language, imagination, and ecclesial self-understanding.

Participants

Six adult members of New Hope Global Methodist Church participated in the study. Participants were recruited through an open invitation extended during Sunday worship, emails, poster and through personal conversations. All six who expressed interest completed the entire six-session workshop and provided both pre- and post-project surveys as well as individual interviews. The sample included:

- One new member who joined the church between late 2024 and early 2025
- The group included individuals from diverse cultural and geographic backgrounds
- Educational backgrounds varied from high school to graduate degrees
- All participants self-identified as committed Christians, though their levels of theological education and spiritual maturity varied

The small sample size reflects the realities of qualitative research in a congregation of seventy-five members. While the findings are not statistically

generalized, they provide rich, thick description of the participants' experiences and offer insights transferable to similar contexts of congregational diversity and conflict.

Data Collection

Before the first workshop session, participants completed a pre-project survey with six open-ended questions. (see Appendix A for the full survey instrument). The interview protocol was designed to explore participants' spiritual journeys, their understanding of God's calling, and their perceptions of the church's missional identity. Rather than focusing on abstract theological definitions alone, the questions invited participants to reflect on their personal encounters with Christ and their experiences within the New Hope Global Methodist Church community. This approach allowed the study to capture how individual faith stories intersect with congregational life.

Some questions examined how participants understood the concept of the missional church and how they perceived their own participation in God's mission. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the ways they currently serve, share their faith, or engage with others in their daily lives. In addition, the interviews explored participants' perspectives on the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming cultural differences and diversity within the congregation into opportunities for unity and shared mission. Finally, the interview protocol invited participants to evaluate the missional character of New Hope Global Methodist Church itself. Through these reflections, the study sought to understand how members interpreted the church's identity, how they perceived its strengths and challenges, and how the Missional Church Workshop may have shaped their understanding of the church's calling.

The Six-Session Missional Church Workshop**:** The Six-Session Missional Church Workshop met weekly for six consecutive weeks, with each session lasting approximately ninety minutes. Each gathering included teaching on the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of missional ecclesiology, helping participants reflect on the church's identity and calling in God's mission. These teaching moments were followed by small-group discussions and personal reflection, allowing participants to process the material together and consider how it related to their own experiences within the congregation. Each session also included a time of intercessory prayer, through which participants sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the life and mission of the church. The workshop concluded with a shared missional project in which participants collaboratively engaged in outreach to the local community, providing a practical opportunity to embody the missional principles explored throughout the sessions.

Immediately following the sixth session, participants completed post-project survey**,** the same six-question survey. This allowed for direct comparison of responses to assess shifts in understanding and identity.

Within two weeks of completing the workshop, each participant engaged in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interviews were designed to explore participants' reflections on the workshop experience, their evolving understanding of the missional church, and their sense of readiness to participate more actively in God's mission (see Appendix B for the complete interview questions). Participants were also invited to reflect on potential challenges they might face in living out a missional calling and to offer suggestions that could help the congregation grow more fully into its missional identity.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes. The conversational format allowed participants to elaborate on their earlier survey responses and to share personal stories that illustrated their experiences. This process provided space for participants to reflect more deeply on the relationship between theological insight gained during the workshop and their lived practices within the life of the congregation.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical integrity was essential throughout this project, especially because participants came from different relational histories within the church, some founding members, some newer attendees. All participants were fully informed of the project's purpose, process, and voluntary nature before participating. Confidentiality was maintained by securely storing all written materials and removing names from survey and interview data. Because the project included open sharing about personal faith and church experiences, participants were never pressured to disclose more than they felt comfortable sharing. Space was given for silence, emotional reflection, and prayer when needed. The project also sought to embody pastoral values of respect, humility, and hospitality, ensuring that each voice was honored. Particular care was taken to represent participants' perspectives truthfully and respectfully in the analysis. Ultimately, ethical conduct in this project was not only procedural but spiritual – reflecting Christlike love, protecting the dignity of all participants, and fostering trust within the New Hope community.

Implementation

The implementation phase of the project, "Fostering Unity Among Church Members through the Missional Church Workshop at New Hope Global Methodist Church," formally began on June 18, 2025, following several months of theological preparation, curriculum design, and logistical planning. The project concluded on September 30, 2025, after completion of the post-surveys, interviews, and final reflections. Over this period, six adult participants – representing both founding members and newer congregants – engaged in a structured six-session missional formation workshop designed to cultivate shared understanding, spiritual unity, and participation in God's mission.

Table 1. Session 1: Orientation and Pre-Assessment

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Welcome Opening Prayer Devotion Sharing Life Confidential Covenant	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Workshop Pre-Survey Orientation	40 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Break	10 minutes	
Discussion & Missional Project Planning	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Announcement Next Session Agenda Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

The first session introduced the project's vision and goals, emphasizing that unity in mission requires both spiritual formation and relational healing. After an opening prayer, devotion, and life-sharing, participants reviewed the confidentiality covenant,

which ensured a safe environment for honesty and vulnerability. Participants then completed the pre-project open-ended survey, reflecting on their understanding of missional church, sense of calling, current ministry involvement, and perception of New Hope's unity. Many expressed uncertainties about what the term "missional" meant, while also acknowledging personal and congregational tensions. The session ended with prayer for the Spirit's guidance throughout the six-session journey.

Table 2. Session 2: Biblical Foundation–Jesus' Prayer for Unity (John 17:19–23)

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Spiritual Formation Opening Prayer Devotion Sharing Life Confidential Covenant	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Biblical Foundation Session 1 Reading Scripture (John 17:19-23)	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Break	10 minutes	
Biblical Foundation Session 2 Reading Scripture (John 17:19-23)	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Discussion & Missional Project Planning	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associate /Participants
Announcements Next Session Agenda Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

The second session focused on the biblical foundation of the project, particularly Jesus' high priestly prayer. After prayer, devotion, and sharing life together, participants read John 17:19–23, exploring Jesus' desire that believers be united "as one" so that the world may believe. Participants discussed distinctions between worldly unity (based on

preference or similarity) and spiritual unity (rooted in the indwelling presence of the Triune God). The group reflected on how lack of unity weakens the church's witness, while Spirit-empowered unity strengthens mission. This session began to reframe unity not as optional harmony, but as essential missional identity.

Table 3. Session 3: Historical Foundation–The Pyongyang Great Revival

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Spiritual Formation Opening Prayer Devotion Sharing Life Confidential Covenant	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Historical Foundation Session 1 Pyongyang Revival	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Break	10 minutes	
Historical Foundation Session 2 Pyongyang Revival	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Discussion & Missional Project Planning	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Announcements Next Session Agenda Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

The third session drew on the historical precedent of the 1907 Pyongyang Great Revival, a movement marked by deep repentance, public confession, reconciliation, and powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Participants were moved by the story of how Koreans from different classes, tribes, and denominations experienced profound unity through the Spirit's conviction. Participants then discussed parallels between the revival and the challenges at New Hope GMC. Many expressed hope that God could bring

similar Spirit-led healing and unity today. The session clarified that true unity is not uniformity, but shared surrender to Christ's lordship and participation in God's mission.

Table 4. Session 4: Theological Foundation– Charles Van Engen and God's Missionary People

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Spiritual Formation Opening Prayer Devotion Sharing Life Confidential Covenant	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Theological Foundation Session 1 God's Missionary People	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Break	10 minutes	
Theological Foundation Session 2 God's Missionary People	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Discussion & Missional Project Planning	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Announcements Next Session Agenda Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

Session four introduced Charles Van Engen's influential theology, particularly his conviction that the church is not merely engaged in mission—it is God's missionary people by identity. Participants examined the implications of this perspective for New Hope GMC: unity is not based on tradition or personality, but on shared calling to participate in God's redemptive mission.

Through guided discussion, participants began naming the barriers—fear, mistrust, past wounds—that had hindered unity. Many experienced deep conviction as they realized that unity cannot exist apart from embracing God's missionary identity together.

Table 5. Session 5: Interdisciplinary Foundation–Alan J. Roxburgh's Missional Leadership

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Spiritual Formation Opening Prayer Devotion Sharing Life Confidential Covenant	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Interdisciplinary Foundation Session 1 Missional Leadership	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Break	10 minutes	
Interdisciplinary Foundation Session 2 Missional Leadership	20 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Discussion & Missional Project Planning	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Announcements Next Session Agenda Closing Prayer	5 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

The fifth session applied insights from Alan J. Roxburgh's missional leadership theory to the relational and structural tensions in the church. Participants learned the difference between change (external adjustments) and transition (internal emotional transformation). Roxburgh's framework helped them understand that lasting unity requires not only new programs but deeper Spirit-led discernment, vulnerability, and relational courage. Participants identified areas where leadership in the church needed to shift from control to collaboration, from assumption to listening, and from anxiety to prayerful discernment. Many expressed new hope that they could serve as agents of reconciliation and unity.

Table 6. Session 6: Missional Project Implementation and Post-Assessment

Lesson	Time	Instructor
Spiritual Formation Opening Prayer Missional Project	90 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Post-Survey	30 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Discussion & Reflection	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants
Thanksgiving, or Summary Closing Prayer	15 minutes	Pastor/Context Associates/Participants

The final session focused on implementing a collaboratively designed missional project, a practical ministry initiative through which participants embodied the principles learned throughout the workshop. Although the group initially generated several outreach ideas, scheduling challenges and summer travel limited the scope of the project. As a result, the participants decided to integrate their missional practice into the church's monthly community outreach event, the Korean Buffet ministry.

During this event, six workshop participants intentionally engaged in various forms of service and outreach. Three participants assisted with preparing and serving food, while another member contributed ingredients for the meal. Two participants served as greeters inside the church, warmly welcoming guests and helping them feel comfortable within the church environment. One participant devoted time specifically to praying for visitors who expressed personal needs, ensuring that the event became not merely an opportunity to share food but also a moment to share the love and compassion of Christ through prayer and spiritual care.

In addition to serving during the meal, several participants spent approximately thirty minutes outside the church singing praise songs and engaging in brief street evangelism with people passing by. This experience allowed the group to practice missional engagement together in a visible and tangible way within the surrounding community. Through these shared activities—hospitality, prayer, service, and public witness—the participants experienced unity through shared participation in God's mission.

Following the project, participants completed the post-project survey and participated in in-depth interviews. Their reflections revealed significant shifts in their understanding of the missional church, personal calling, congregational unity, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Many participants expressed a desire for continued missional training, deeper prayer gatherings, and broader participation from the entire congregation. The workshop concluded with a time of thanksgiving, testimonies, and a renewed commitment to pursue unity through shared participation in God's mission.

Summary of Learning

Findings

Four major themes emerged from analysis of the data: (1) clarified understanding of "missional church," (2) awakened sense of personal calling, (3) concrete missional participation, and (4) deepened pneumatology. Each theme is explored below with extensive quotation from participants' survey responses and interviews.

Theme One: From Fragmentation to Clarity—Understanding "Missional Church"

Perhaps the most dramatic shift occurred in participants' understanding of what it means to be a "missional church." The pre-project surveys revealed widespread confusion and fragmentation. One participant candidly said, "I don't know. I haven't heard that expression before. This response was striking not because ignorance is shameful but because it revealed how thoroughly the language of "missional church" had failed to penetrate congregational consciousness despite its prominence in contemporary ecclesiology.

Another participant, though more familiar with church terminology, defined "missional church" entirely in terms of internal dynamics: "Helps members grow in their beliefs and faith, help to encourage dialogue by strengthening relationships among church members." This inward-facing definition reflected what Van Engen critiques as the "come-structure" of modern American churches–the assumption that the church exists primarily to serve its existing members rather than to be sent into the world.[2]

A participant offered a partial definition that mentioned outreach but remained somewhat vague: "Missional church: I think it means reaching out to others so that they can see Jesus." Only one participant provided a theologically robust definition before the workshop:

> The missional church reaches out beyond the sanctuary and beyond the congregation. Always seeking the lost and to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We do nothing on our own power, but trust in the power of Jesus to lead us to who/what/when/where & how we can be of service in God's name. (Participant, Pre-Survey)

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[2] Charles E. Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991), 99-103.

Yet even this participant expressed frustration that New Hope GMC did not embody this vision: "I do not think that our church is a missional church in the true sense of the phrase. We do missions projects and have a few people very involved in those, but we are not seeing fruits (new believers) of that labor."

The post-project surveys revealed a striking transformation. All six participants now articulated clear, biblically grounded, outward-oriented definitions of missional church. One participant, who had previously focused on internal growth, now wrote: The missional church is actively engaged in making disciples of Jesus Christ." The shift from "helping members grow" to "making disciples" represents a fundamental reorientation from internal focus to mission. Another participant, who had not heard the term before, demonstrated remarkable growth: "A missional church is one that doesn't just 'have a mission statement,' but they live it — as a group & individually." This definition captures what Roxburgh emphasizes: that missional identity is not about having the right documents but about embodied practices.[3]

One response integrated the language of the Holy Spirit, unity, and mission: "My understanding of the missional church is that it is a church with a common mission/purpose. Members of the congregation are unified in that mission, are filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit, and feel called by God to share the gospel."

Another reflection demonstrated a more developed theological articulation: "The Missional Church has a duty to God Almighty, Jesus our Savior, and the Holy Spirit – to teach about them and to worship God–in church building and out of it. Building the Believers IN the congregation and seeking the lost outside–to proclaim Christ crucified

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[3] Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 112.

and Risen AND to "Feed the Sheep." The language here – "in church building and out of it," "building believers IN... seeking the lost outside" – reflects the workshop's teaching on the church's dual responsibility for edification and evangelism, nurture and witness.

In the interviews, participants elaborated on how their understanding had shifted. A participant explained:

> With the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ, we want to reach out to others. Yes, we want to bring others to know Jesus. So it's not only about us, right? But it's also about God's people all beyond the church wall, so we can continue to reach out there. And the unity, within the people that are already here. Of course, when we are united together, and then finally, when we bring someone, they can see love of Jesus.

Another participant connected missional identity to the church's fundamental nature rather than one activity among many:

> We are to—Jesus said "feed my sheep"—and I think that's what we're doing inside our church from the worship service to the Sunday school. And I think it's also what we're having more of a desire to do when we walk out the door to our homes... I think we're feeling our identity as a church now who are walking out.

The phrase "our identity as a church" signals a shift from seeing mission as a program to understanding mission as constitutive of the church's very being. This aligns precisely with Van Engen's thesis that "the mission of the Church... is not one of many tasks the Church performs. Rather, mission defines the Church."[4]

The data suggest that the workshop successfully addressed the conceptual fragmentation present at the outset. By the conclusion, all participants could articulate a shared understanding of missional church characterized by:

- Making disciples (not merely maintaining membership)

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[4] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 73.

- Reaching beyond the sanctuary (not merely gathering for worship)
- Living out the mission (not merely having a mission statement)
- Being filled and guided by the Holy Spirit (not relying on human effort alone)
- Seeking the lost while building believers (both evangelism and edification)

This shared conceptual framework provides the necessary foundation for developing a shared missional culture at New Hope GMC.

Theme Two: From Uncertainty to Affirmation—Personal Calling

A second major shift occurred in participants' sense of personal calling. The pre-project surveys revealed that while most participants had some notion of being called by God, their language was often general, moralistic, or uncertain. One participant expressed frank doubt: "I'm not absolutely certain God has called me." This honest admission is significant. In a church culture that often assumes everyone should confidently affirm divine calling, this participant's uncertainty reflects either genuine theological confusion or insufficient formation in understanding vocation.

Another participant framed calling in broad humanitarian terms: "I like to believe He has called on me to assist Him and do good for mankind by making this world a better and safer place." While laudable, this language lacks the specifically Christian and missional content that characterizes New Testament descriptions of calling. The focus is on moral improvement ("do good," "better place") rather than on proclamation, discipleship, or participation in God's redemptive purposes.

A similar pattern appeared in another participant's response: "God has called me to help others, be kind, be a light for others to see so others may also find Jesus/God. He

has called me to help represent Him, be the best mother I can to family and pets." Again, the language of "help," "be kind," and "be a light" reflects genuine Christian commitment but lacks the explicit missional vocabulary of witness, proclamation, and disciple-making.

The post-project surveys revealed a striking shift toward confident affirmation of calling expressed in explicitly missional and biblical language. One participant who had earlier expressed uncertainty now wrote:

> Yes, God has called me — why? To love others with God's love, God's forgiveness, God's Holy Spirit, and joy. To share His love, forgiveness, word, Holy Spirit, and light to others, and family. For others to know Jesus so their lives can be abundant with joy, love, peace + Holy Spirit. God has called me to be best mother I can be and help God and His children.

The shift from "I'm not absolutely certain" to "Yes, God has called me" represents a profound movement from doubt to confidence. Moreover, the content of the calling has become explicitly missional: "to share His love, forgiveness, word, Holy Spirit... for others to know Jesus."

Another participant also articulated a deeper theological understanding of calling: "Yes, because He loves me and wants what is best for me and that I may have eternal life with Jesus." While still brief, this response grounds calling in God's love and purposes rather than in human moral effort.

A particularly striking response employed explicitly missional language: "Yes, to be a disciple for Him! Called to pray. Ambassador for others." The terms "disciple" and "ambassador" reflect the workshop's teaching on New Testament vocabulary for Christian identity and vocation. An ambassador represents a sovereign in foreign territory—precisely the image Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 5:20 to describe believers' role

in the world. One participant who already demonstrated mature faith further deepened her understanding.:

> Yes, I do. I think that because I know Him and He knows me. He knows I am willing. My Father expects me to act and show that I am a Daughter of the Most High. He has been with me in great suffering and yet He has given me a heart of praise. I became a true disciple of Jesus.

The phrase “I became a true disciple of Jesus” signals a qualitative shift in self-understanding. This participant no longer sees herself merely as a church member or moral person but as a disciple—one who follows Jesus and participates in His mission.

In the interviews, participants elaborated on this theme. When asked about motivation to engage in God's mission, one response expressed strong enthusiasm: “Yes, absolutely. Your workshop was inspiring and motivating. Yeah, it got us excited, more excited.” The language of being “excited” contrasts sharply with the earlier uncertainty. One response highlighted how the workshop created “common understanding”:

> I think that the missional church sequence has shown me that it’s not just my own impulse. That service is what Jesus would have me do... And I love seeing that articulated... That made me feel really good about the denomination, and about my local church, and I think it also really helped to create common understanding among myself, and the others that took the missional sequence with you.

This comment reveals that the workshop provided not only individual clarity but also a shared framework (“common understanding”) that allows participants to see themselves as part of a unified mission rather than isolated individuals pursuing personal agendas.

The shift from uncertainty or general moralism to confident, biblically articulated calling is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses the pastoral challenge

identified in Chapter One: many believers have not been adequately formed in understanding Christian vocation. Second, it creates the motivational foundation for sustained missional engagement. As Roxburgh notes, people need not only skills but identity formation—they need to see themselves as called and sent.[5] Third, the use of biblical language (disciple, ambassador, feed Christ's sheep) indicates that participants have internalized not merely ideas but a theological vocabulary that will shape ongoing formation.

Theme Three: From Internal to External

The workshop did not merely change how participants talked about mission; it changed what they actually did. The pre-project surveys revealed that participants were already active in church life, but their activities were primarily internal: serving on committees, reading the Bible, attending worship, personal prayer. For example:

> I'm engaged in the church. I serve on several committees. I pray, read the Bible, and consult with God whenever navigating life's choices. I do the right things. I recognize that I'm a sinner and seek His help in making me the person He wants me to be.

This response describes genuine Christian discipleship but focuses on personal spiritual disciplines and institutional service. Another participant similarly emphasized internal relationships: "I want to strengthen relationships with God and members of our church. I admit to being somewhat conflicted in my beliefs but I want to have even more faith and understanding of the Bible and religious beliefs." Again, the focus is on strengthening existing relationships within the church rather than reaching beyond the

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[5] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 60-62.

congregation. Another participant described outreach efforts in general terms: “I try to be a light in the best way I can, even though I fail at times. I try to help with church functions to reach out to the community so that people can see our church and become familiar with our church, its people, and the pastor.”

The post-project surveys revealed a shift toward specific, intentional, outward-facing missional engagement. One participant wrote:

> I'm a member of mission and outreach committee at our church. I have invited family + friends to attend church and come to our Korean Buffet. We also had Christmas bazaar and summer hot dog sale. We help support the homeless shelters, animal shelter, pregnancy care center. We hope to continue with many more outreach ideas and activities.

The specificity is striking: Korean Buffet, Christmas bazaar, homeless shelters, animal shelter, pregnancy care center. This participant has moved from general service on committees to concrete missional activities with identifiable beneficiaries. Perhaps the most remarkable example of transformation appeared in one participant’s response:

> I have several women that I meet with weekly or some at least monthly. Some are Christians already, but most are not believers (yet):
> - A woman whose husband has Alzheimer's and many physical issues
> - A woman whose husband died recently and who is struggling to move forward
> - A woman who has great family & many people around her, but who has no friend
> - A woman who is an atheist (according to her), she was raised Catholic
> - A Latina woman whose adult son died because of medical error I am always looking for people who God puts in my path.

The phrase “most are not believers (yet)” captures a fundamental shift in missional consciousness. This participant now sees relationships with non-believers not as incidental but as central to her calling. The parenthetical “(yet)” expresses hope grounded in prayer and intentionality. The detailed list—woman with Alzheimer's

husband, recent widow, lonely woman, atheist, grieving mother—demonstrates that this is not abstract talk but concrete relational investment. The closing sentence—"I am always looking for people who God puts in my path"—reveals a posture of readiness and expectation that characterizes missional living.

The interviews provided further evidence of this shift and included powerful stories illustrating how the workshop transformed congregational culture. During one of the interviews, the following narrative was shared.:

> Following a worship service on a recent Sunday, most congregants had already left the church when one church member remained. That afternoon, I went to McDonald's with my children and this church member. While there, we noticed a woman experiencing homelessness sitting alone in the restaurant. Almost instinctively, the church member and I recognized this as a moment to act. Without hesitation, we approached her, greeted her, and asked her name—a small but significant act of dignity. She told us her name was Anna. We asked Anna how she was doing and whether she was hungry. She responded that she was not in need of food, so we then asked if we could pray for her. She agreed. In the middle of the restaurant, without concern about how others might perceive us, we prayed together. After the prayer, it was visibly evident that something had shifted. Her countenance changed, her eyes appeared brighter, and she seemed genuinely refreshed. We sensed the quiet but powerful work of Christ in that moment. Anna thanked us, and we shared with her where our church is located before parting ways. Although the encounter was brief and seemingly small, it was deeply significant. The church member and I both sensed an immediate internal response—we have to do something. This instinctive movement toward compassion reflected a growing missional awareness. Rather than debating or hesitating, action came naturally. For me, this moment was a source of deep gratitude, as it revealed the emergence of a shared missional identity within the congregation.

In response, one participant immediately reflected on this encounter, noting, "I saw her before. And, I did the same thing. It's really wonderful." This story is significant for several reasons. First, it demonstrates spontaneous missional action. The church member and pastor did not plan this encounter; they responded instinctively when they saw someone in need. Second, it shows dignity-focused ministry. The first question was

"What is your name?"—affirming Anna's personhood before offering help. Third, it prioritizes spiritual need. When Anna declined food, they asked if they could pray—recognizing that her deepest need was for God's presence. Fourth, it reveals changed congregational culture. The church member's comment—"I saw her before"—indicates that in the past, seeing Anna would not have prompted action. But now, "right away when we saw her, we gotta do something." This is precisely the shift Van Engen describes: from a church that has programs for mission to a church whose members instinctively live as missionaries in daily life.[6]

This story illustrates what the qualitative data make visible: the emergence of missional instincts and practices that extend beyond church programs into ordinary spaces. Members are now "always looking for people God puts in their path," responding spontaneously to encounters with those in need, and finding creative ways to bring the gospel beyond the church walls. This shift from internal focus to external engagement is central to becoming a missional church.

Theme Four: From Simple Affirmation to Rich Theology—Understanding the Holy Spirit

The pre-project survey asked participants whether they believed the Holy Spirit could transform differences and diversity into blessings that empower mission. All six participants responded affirmatively, but their answers were brief and offered little theological depth. Typical responses included statements such as "He [the Holy Spirit] can transform! Absolutely," "Yes," "Of course," "The Holy Spirit can do anything and everything," and "Absolutely, yes. Only the Holy Spirit can do this." These responses

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[6] Van Engen, *God's Missionary People*, 107-110.

reflect sound doctrine in that participants affirmed the Spirit's power. However, the responses lacked elaboration and functioned primarily as simple affirmations rather than theologically developed reflections.

The post-project surveys revealed a significant deepening in participants' reflections. Several responses now connected the work of the Holy Spirit to theological themes emphasized during the workshop. Participants wrote statements such as "Yes. Thanks be to God. The Holy Spirit brings us together and empowers us," "I truly believe the Holy Spirit can transform our circumstances to help us fulfill God's mission," and "Yes. The Holy Spirit empowers me to use my opportunities, gifts, and skills, and enables others to fulfill His mission." These responses demonstrate a clearer connection between the Spirit's work and the church's missional calling. One response offered a particularly rich theological reflection:

> Only the Holy Spirit can give each of us the understanding and belief that we are each a particular part of the Body of Christ and that means we have to be different by design. The Holy Spirit alone can temper temptations of jealousy, pettiness, and mistrust — and give elderly folks appreciation for the different roles God has for us and the eagerness to encourage each other to develop and exercise the gifts and situations He has given us — to use them for His glory.

This response demonstrates sophisticated pneumatology. The Spirit is understood as the one who forms ecclesial identity ("we are each a particular part of the Body of Christ"), who sanctifies character ("temper temptations of jealousy, pettiness, and mistrust"), and who enables mutual appreciation of diversity ("appreciation for the different roles"). The phrase "we have to be different by design" captures the workshop's teaching that diversity is not a problem to solve but a gift embedded in God's creative and redemptive purposes. This participant has moved from simple affirmation that the

Spirit "can" do something to articulating how the Spirit actually works – giving understanding, tempering sin, cultivating appreciation, empowering service.

The movement from simple affirmation to theologically developed reflection suggests that participants deepened their understanding of the Holy Spirit's work in forming identity, sanctifying relationships, sustaining unity amid diversity, and empowering mission. This pneumatologically depth is essential for a congregation seeking to become missional, since, as Roxburgh emphasizes, missional transformation is fundamentally the Spirit's work rather than human achievement.[7]

Conclusion

Overall, this project effectively achieved its primary objectives by fostering significant growth in participants' understanding of church identity, personal calling, and missional engagement. Participants demonstrated a clear shift from vague or inward-focused views of church life toward a more outward-oriented understanding of the church as a missional community. Rather than emphasizing internal membership care alone, they increasingly recognized the church's calling to serve those outside its walls, particularly the lost and those not yet connected to the faith community.

Alongside this shift in ecclesial understanding, participants developed a stronger sense of personal calling. Many began to see themselves not merely as church attendees but as disciples actively sent into God's mission. This renewed perspective helped participants identify concrete roles – such as intercessor, ambassador, or teacher – rooted

[7] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 27-31.

in a theological conviction that God continually sends His people for the sake of the world.

Missional engagement also deepened in practice. Participants' descriptions of ministry moved beyond program-based involvement toward intentional, relational, and life-integrated expressions of God's mission. Mission was no longer perceived as an occasional activity of the church but as a way of life shaped by daily obedience and relational presence.

The project further contributed to deeper theological reflection among participants. Their language regarding the Holy Spirit, unity, and diversity became more biblically grounded and theologically mature. Participants increasingly articulated the conviction that unity is formed through the work of the Holy Spirit, that diversity is a gift to be stewarded for God's mission, and that true missional engagement depends on spiritual empowerment rather than human effort alone.

Finally, participants adopted more discerning criteria for evaluating church identity and health. Rather than measuring faithfulness primarily by attendance or financial stability, they began to assess the church through missional markers such as disciple-making, evangelism, unity, and faithful proclamation of the gospel. Collectively, these transformations support the project's hypothesis that missional education and formational experiences—rooted in Scripture, theology, and practical ministry—can cultivate a shared missional identity among diverse members and foster deeper unity within the local church.

Taken together, these findings support a practice-based and confessional claim: when a congregation is re-formed by Scripture, prayer, and the Spirit's work, unity

becomes not merely an interpersonal goal but a visible sign of participation in God's mission.

Limitations

Several limitations of this project should be acknowledged. First, the findings reflect the experiences of a relatively small group of participants who were already highly committed to the life of the church. As a result, the outcomes cannot be readily generalized to the entire congregation, particularly to members who were not involved in the workshop.

In addition, participation in the project was voluntary, which introduced the possibility of self-selection bias. Those who chose to take part were likely individuals already inclined toward spiritual growth, theological reflection, and ministry involvement. This predisposition may have contributed to the positive nature of the outcomes and may not fully represent the perspectives of less-engaged members.

The duration of the project also presents a limitation. Changes in understanding, language, and practice were measured over a relatively short period of time. While participants demonstrated meaningful growth during the workshop, longer-term follow-up would be necessary to determine whether these shifts are sustained and integrated into the ongoing life of the congregation.

Finally, the study relied entirely on qualitative self-reported data, including surveys, interviews, and written reflections. No external observations or quantitative measures were used to corroborate participants' responses. Nevertheless, the depth,

clarity, and consistency of the data provide valuable insights that can inform future ministry planning and guide further research.

Implications and Next Steps for Ministry

The outcomes of this project point toward several concrete directions for the ongoing ministry of New Hope Global Methodist Church. One significant implication is the need to expand missional formation across the entire congregation. The content and practices developed through the Missional Church Workshop can be adapted for use in Sunday School classes, small groups, and Bible studies so that missional identity becomes a shared language and vision throughout the church. In addition, the testimonies of workshop participants offer a powerful means of inviting others into deeper discernment of their calling and encouraging broader participation in God's mission.

Another important direction involves strengthening evangelism and gospel articulation training. Participants consistently expressed a desire for greater confidence in sharing their faith and leading others to salvation in a biblically grounded way. This suggests the value of developing a clear and accessible evangelism process that equips members to share their personal testimonies, articulate the core message of the gospel with clarity, and prayerfully guide seekers toward a response of faith.

The project also highlights the importance of creating clear pathways for missional engagement. Existing ministries, including community meals, fairs, outreach events, and local partnerships, should be intentionally reframed as missional opportunities rather than merely charitable activities. When these ministries are approached with a relational and invitational posture, they become spaces where

authentic relationships can form and where individuals may be welcomed into a life-transforming encounter with Christ.

Sustaining unity through prayer emerged as another critical direction for the church. The ongoing Thursday prayer meeting has proven to be a vital space where the Holy Spirit nurtures missional unity and aligns the congregation around God's purposes. Through consistent corporate prayer, the missional identity cultivated through the workshop can take deeper root, particularly as the congregation is continually encouraged to intercede for the salvation of those within their relational and community networks.

Finally, the increasing diversity of New Hope GMC calls for intentional theological and pastoral teaching that frames diversity as a resource for God's mission rather than a challenge to be managed. As the congregation becomes more racially, culturally, and generationally diverse, leadership must consistently emphasize that differences are Spirit-given gifts meant to enrich the church's witness. In Christ, every believer is welcomed as a brother or sister, and the diversity of the body becomes a vital instrument through which God's kingdom is extended.

This project demonstrates that a missional church workshop grounded in Scripture and missional theology can create significant transformation among a small group of believers. Participants developed a deeper understanding of God's mission, a clearer sense of their personal calling, and a renewed perspective of New Hope's identity as a local church. They no longer see themselves as isolated individuals but as Spirit-empowered disciples who participate together in the mission of God. New Hope GMC is becoming a "missional church in the making."

This is not a completed state but a hopeful, Spirit-driven process—marked by unity, calling, and renewed imagination. The seeds planted through this project hold immense promise for future unity and missional fruitfulness within the church and will likely influence the life and ministry of the New Hope community for many years to come.

APPENDIX A

PRE- AND POST-OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNARIES

1. When did you first meet Jesus, and when did you start attending New Hope Global Methodist Church?
2. Do you believe God has called you? If yes, why do you think He has called you?
3. What is your understanding of the missional church? What is the missional church?
4. How are you currently involved in God's mission?
5. Can the Holy Spirit transform our differences and diversity into great blessings that empower us to fulfill God's mission?
6. Is our Church a missional church? Why or Why not?

APPENDIX B

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS AFTER POST SURVEY

1. How would you define the missional church now?
2. After completing the six-session missional church workshop, do you feel equipped and motivated to engage in God's mission? Why or Why not?
3. What challenges do you expect to face as you try to live out God's mission?
4. If you could make one change in our church to help it become more missional, what would it be?

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